



THE NEW SUNDAY EXPRESS

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Jaishankar holds talks with Lankan minister
External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday held talks with Sri Lankan Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa and discussed projects and investment plans by India that would strengthen the economy of the island nation. During the "detailed" virtual meeting, Jaishankar also raised the issue of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan custody and urged for their early release as a humanitarian gesture | P7



Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister



Department of Health and Family Welfare



Government of Karnataka is Fully Prepared to handle COVID-19 in the State



Shri Basavaraj S. Bommai
Hon'ble Chief Minister

OUR PREPAREDNESS



Testing Capacity

265 Labs
2,19,980 Capacity Per Day (Excluding RAT)



Physical Triage Centres

540
Bangalore City 168
Districts 372



Genome Sequencing Labs

Functioning Labs* :5

- NIMHANS, Bengaluru
- InSTEM, Bengaluru
- NCBS, Bengaluru
- IISc, Bengaluru
- JNCASR, Bengaluru

New Labs

- BMCRI, Bengaluru
- Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee MC&RI, Bengaluru
- Mysuru Medical College, Mysuru
- GIMS, Kalaburagi
- BIMS, Belagavi

*Capacity - 370 samples / cycle, each cycle will take 4-5 days.



Staff Availability

82,543
Medical Doctor / Staff (Health + Medical Education)



Oxygen Infrastructure

1091 MT Oxygen Capacity
1170 MT Oxygen Production
MT - Metric Tons

	Nos.	Capacity
PSA Plants Commissioned	217	220 MT
LMO Tank	68	630 MT
Oxygen Cylinders	16387	135 MT
Oxygen Concentrators	7952	106 MT



Details of Bed Availability

1,94,363 Total Beds

Category	General Beds	O2 / HDU	ICU	ICU-Ventilator	TOTAL
Govt. Medical Colleges	4086	12445	1124	1689	19344
Govt. Hospitals	10604	18316	1111	1718	31749
Pvt. Medical Colleges	21850	11138	1441	1027	35456
Pvt. Hospitals	89228	13357	3540	1689	107814
TOTAL	125768	55256	7216	6123	194363



Ventilators (PM Cares, Govt)

2871
Received and Installed



Vaccination Progress

9,12,79,922 Doses

18+ age group 1 st Dose	4,86,58,866	99%
18+ age group 2 Doses	4,04,89,045	83%
15-17 age group 1 st Dose	18,89,614	60%

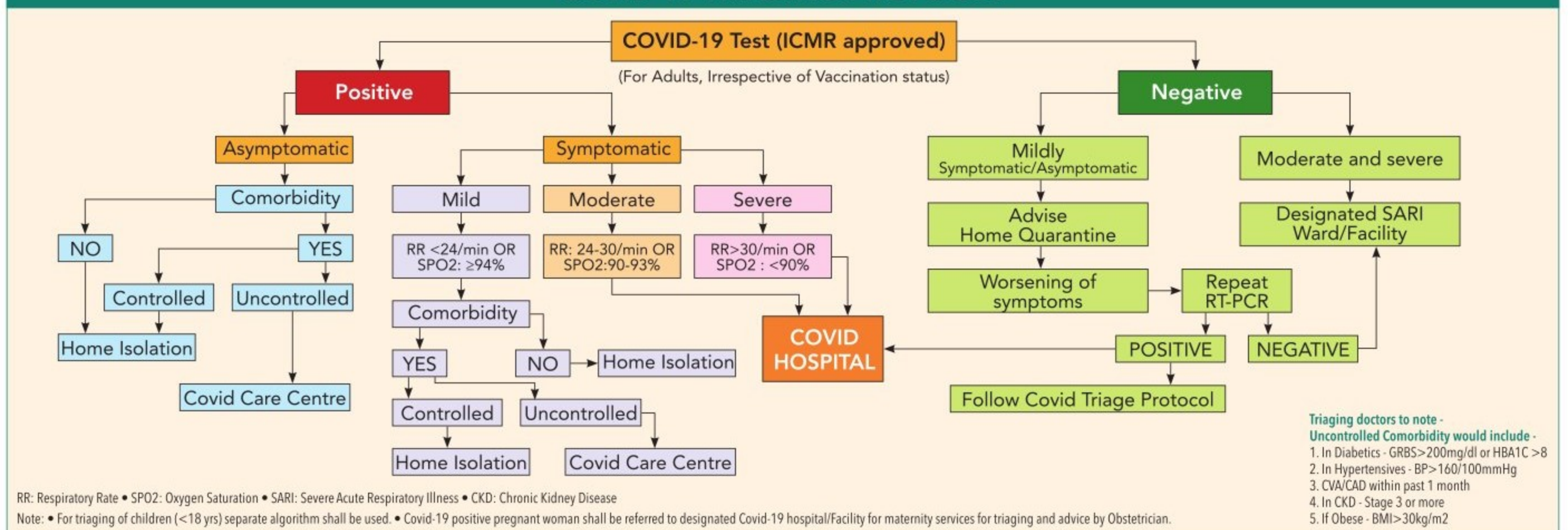


War Room

41 War Rooms

State War Room	1
Central War Room (BBMP)	1
Zonal Control Rooms (BBMP)	8
District Level Control Rooms	31

COVID-19 TRIAGING PROTOCOL



COVID-19 MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

C Anti Coagulation	O Oxygenation	V Anti Virals	I Anti Inflammatory	D Discharge
Stop Unnecessary Antibiotics Bacterial Infection is uncommon at presentation, routine antibiotic prescription is unnecessary. To follow Antimicrobial stewardship.		Covid Appropriate Behaviour To maintain physical distance, indoor mask use, strict hand hygiene. Monitor temperature and oxygen saturation with pulse oximetry.		



Hon'ble Minister for Health & Family Welfare and Medical Education, Dr. K. Sudhakar receiving India Today Healthgiri Award.

HOME ISOLATION

DO	DON'T
• Stay in separate, well-ventilated room • Use triple layer mask and discard in a paper bag after 72 hours, cutting into pieces • Maintain adequate hydration • Follow respiratory etiquettes • Follow hand hygiene	• Do not use Remdesivir at home • Do not use Budesonide nebulizer without advise of medical practitioner • Do not use oxygen cylinder without advise of medical practitioner • Do not undergo X-Ray / CT-Scan without advise of medical practitioner

End isolation after at least 7 days have passed from testing positive and no fever for 3 successive days. No testing is needed.



In case of aggravation of symptoms / emergencies, call

14410
State COVID Helpline

1533 BBMP Helpline

108 Emergency Ambulance Service

"To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures." - is the fundamental duty of every Citizen of our Country, enshrined in the Constitution.



Health For All, Health Everywhere.



SAVIOUR OF STRAYS

42-year-old Rajani Shetty of Mangaluru has been rescuing sick and injured stray animals and birds for the last 22 years and giving them the care they need

I earn ₹12,000 a month and keep a part of it to look after the animals and birds. My home houses 29 dogs, of which five are paralysed, 15 cats, a rabbit and five injured eagles.

- Rajani Shetty

DIVYA CUTINHO @Mangaluru

SOME heroes don't wear capes and some believe that 'the left hand should not know what the right is doing'. One such noble soul is 42-year-old Rajani Shetty, who has been on a mission to rescue stray animals and unfortunate birds from hunger and danger, for the last 22 years.

For Rajani, a resident of Ballabagh in Mangaluru, it all started in Mumbai, her hometown, where she no-

ticed a puppy lying in a sewage drain crying for help. "I was disturbed seeing the little animal shivering and drenched in dirt. I immediately rescued the puppy and for the next 14 years, he remained a part of my family," says Rajani, who works as a domestic help and babysitter. The kind-hearted soul has so far rescued over 2,000 birds and animals. Married to Damodar Shetty, the couple has two daughters Shwetha and Rithika and son Prathik.

Each day, she cooks 60 kg of rice mixed with chicken waste

to feed over 750 dogs and cats on the streets of Mangaluru. When chicken waste isn't available, she cooks rice mixed with milk and egg. Starting her day at 5.30 am, she and one of her daughters hop on a two-wheeler and go around the city feeding the animals. They repeat it between 9.30 am and 1 pm.

The family of five lives in a tiled house paying a rent of Rs 9,000 per month. "I earn Rs 12,000 a month and keep a part of it to look after the animals and birds. My home houses 29 dogs, of which five are paralysed, 15 cats, a rabbit and five injured eagles," she says.

Asked what drives her, she says, "My aim is to inspire people. I want them to help stray animals and birds in distress, whether they are injured or sick. People should not turn a blind eye to the sufferings of animals and birds."

Rajani has risked her life several times to rescue animals. During the first Covid-induced lockdown in 2020, a video of her climbing down into a well by tying a rope to her waist to rescue a dog went viral. Recently, she climbed down another well, which was 42-foot deep, and rescued a lactating dog.

"For the last 13 years, I have fed, rescued and treated animals using my own money. During the lockdowns, I struggled to feed them. I could not pay the house rent for almost five months and had to vacate. Along with my family, my animals and birds too became homeless. However, after my dog rescue video went viral, many donors helped me financially. I focus on feeding animals in remote areas where they rarely get anything to eat. I regularly visit State Bank, Police Commissionerate, Hoige Bazar and Bunder localities in Mangaluru to feed animals," she says.

Mangaluru-based NGO Animal Care Trust helps sterilise Rajani's animals, which are treated at a clinic run by Dr Yashaswi Naravi, a veterinary doctor at Kulshekar, and the Government Veterinary Hospital on Jail Road.

Her dream is to build a 24x7 veterinary hospital in Mangaluru exclusively for stray animals and birds. "If humans get injured or fall sick, people rush to help them. These animals and birds too need help. Even in my absence, there should be someone to look after these innocent creatures. A veterinary hospital is needed in Mangaluru," she says.



Rajani Shetty and her daughter Shwetha feeding stray dogs in Mangaluru | EXPRESS

Garadi manes of Gadag

A drive to stay fit and keep safe has motivated the youth in the district to adopt a fitness routine with many seeking the wisdom of traditional centres

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @Gadag

THE pandemic that brought a sense of dread and uncertainty seems to have triggered a newfound zeal among people to maintain good health and fitness. Not restricted to urban areas alone, this phenomenon of embracing a good life of exercise has been noticed even in small towns. Amid this enthusiasm, many have rediscovered the relevance of 'garadi manes', or traditional gyms, whose history goes back eons.

Gadag's garadi manes are seeing increased footfall for the last two months, and youth from the city and villages are enrolling in these 'vyayam shalas', lifting weights and stretching muscles. Some have made New Year resolutions to embark upon a healthier lifestyle. Last year, Gadag town's garadi manes had just 11 members, which has risen to 26 this year. Lakkundi's garadi mane welcomed nine new members, Hatalageri six new members and Jakkali 18. Garadi manes in other rural pockets too are seeing a revival.

Illustrious past

While much can be said about the ancient past surrounding traditional gyms of India, garadi manes gained prominence in Karnataka's rural areas primarily from 1650, during the reign of Kanthirava Narasara Wadiyar of Mysore.

With simple, rudimentary, yet effective implements, such as gajas, also known as mugdar (Indian wooden clubs), and stone boulders and weights, and a soothing soil floor, these centres were frequented by men for their workout. Trained by 'kushti patas', the members would wrestle each other in bouts called 'kushti'.

During the 1960s, Gadag developed a taste for these time-honoured fitness centres, with several garadi manes emerging in Jakkali, Mallapur, Savadi, Ron and surrounding villages. Many pahalwans practised at these garadi manes, and participated at district, state and national-level dangals and won many trophies. This trend continued well into the 90s.

However, with the advent of modern gyms, powered by high-tech equipment, the garadi manes of Gadag lost many patrons as multi-gyms offered



Ishappa Bangari, a pahalwan from Hanaman Garadi (below), wields a gaja during a workout routine | EXPRESS

various modern workout techniques, geared towards bodybuilding, along with weight loss. As a result, many garadi manes wound up in the district, down to minuscule numbers by 2010.

Back to the basics

As the pandemic motivated people to seek new experiences with the stress on tried and tested formulas – be it immunity boosters or lifestyle changes – garadi manes too got a chance at revival, with many proud pahalwans looking to rekindle interest in this workout regimen amongst the youth.

"Now is the time to attract more people towards these natural exercise centres. I have been training in Gadag for the last 50 years, and new trends have distracted our youth. We wish that they come here and learn these exercises. New technolo-

gies and gyms diverted our youngsters, but the garadi mane exercises are natural and a gift from our ancestors. We need to preserve this culture and pass it on to the coming generations. Nowadays, students come in more numbers on Sundays and holidays. The numbers are increasing, which is a good sign after a decade of slowdown," says Ishappa Bangari (64), a pahalwan from Hanaman Garadi.

"I have been going to garadi manes since I have been three. Now at the age of 54, there's no stopping. The garadi mane regimen is useful for a long life. The exercises are natural and help keep our bodies fit and immune. It's good to see more people returning to these traditional methods," says Sharanagouda Beleri, a garadi mane trainer.

It is because of the contributions and foresight of such passionate and determined individuals that the garadi manes of Gadag are rising again, fit, strong and healthy.

SPARTAN LIFE

Garadi mane fighters are trained and sent for kushti competitions. The fighters use their intelligence, coupled with their strong bodies, while wrestling their opponents. Bhimasani pattu, Udakh, Nikhal, and Jarasandhi pattu, among other wrestling techniques, are taught by the gurus, called 'khalifs' or 'ustadis'. The fight is held on a ground filled with mud, where pahalwans try to pin down the opponent. Pahalwans exercise close to six hours a day. They lift gajas of different weights, drag hundreds of kilos of weight and carry heavy stones of 75-100 kg as a part of their exercises. They also consume a nutrition-rich diet each day – including ghee karjur, 2 litres of milk, sajjagi (dish made of jaggery and semolina) and rottis with sprouts and green vegetables.

ON THE SILVER SCREEN

Garadi manes gained popularity after they were depicted in some Kannada and Hindi films. Popular among them was Dr Rajkumar-starrer Mayura, which created a rage for garadi manes and kushti in the 1980s. Inspired by the movie, garadi mane saw over 40-50 youngsters joining them, said a pahalwan from Gadag. Similarly, Aamir Khan's Dangal, Bollywood actor Salman Khan-starrer Sultan and Kannada actor Sudeep's Pailwan created much interest.

RICH HISTORY

Gadag's Hanaman Garadi started in 1827 and was known for discovering new talent. Hundreds of pahalwans from this garadi mane have won state- and national-level kushti competitions over the decades.

Review regulations: Pvt school's body asks CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

MANY private schools which have been functioning for decades, run the risk of closing down due to regulations being imposed from 2018. The new regulations mandate fire safety and Public Works Department (PWD) approvals among others, in order for schools to get renewal of recognition.

Shashi Kumar, general secretary of the Associated Management of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka (KAMS), said that some of the regulations are not possible to comply with, and implementing them will come at a huge cost to schools. He wrote to the Chief Minister regarding the issue, asking for school fee regulations to be revised so as to account for the cost of implementing the new regulations.

"All old institutions have been religiously following safety regulations. However, getting fire safety and PWD approvals comes at a huge cost to the schools," he said. In the letter to the CM, he highlighted all measures taken to ensure the safety of children in schools. He asked the CM to constitute a separate committee to frame guidelines for private schools regarding fire and building safety.

Previously, the Public Works Department had asked schools to submit a building structural stability certificate, with schools having to pay 0.5 per cent of the building's valuation. Similarly, several other regulations had been imposed on private schools that have previously been running for decades before. "It's not humanly possible to put these regulations in place, it'll also entail a massive fee hike," Shashi Kumar said.



Yet again, fewer migratory birds seen at city lakes

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

ONCE again, many species of migratory birds, especially ducks, have given Bengaluru's lakes a miss this year. Ornithologists and ecologists point out that this predicament is a result of lakes turning into 'soup-bowls', and also because of increased human presence in their vicinity.

Bellandur Lake, which once used to welcome 50,000 ducks, and Hebbal Lake 8,000 of them, are not seeing their arrivals lately.

Noted ornithologist S Subramanya mentioned that since

shallow water spaces no longer exist, the lakes have turned into soup-bowl-like structures, surrounded by walkways and jogging tracks, and with no islands or green spaces left for birds. While the presence of darters and large cormorants is high, since they feed on large fish, other birds are no longer found. Besides, commercial fishing, the presence of humans around water bodies, and damage to the natural ecosystem have made matters only worse.

He added that even as lakes have become perennial, the catchment areas have urbanised and concretised. Treated water



A pair of ducks take flight, fleeing from a stray dog, at Doddakallasandra lake in Bengaluru | RAGHAVENDRA B PACHCHAPUR

entering lakes is still of poor quality, while upstream and downstream water flow is also

affected, due to which the natural zoology has also been impacted.

Meanwhile, a few grey herons, which feed on hyacinth, and purple moorhens can still be seen. But there is little trace of some other species around the city's lakes.

Shallow bird biodiversity has dipped by 60-70 per cent. "The government is violating the Justice NK Patil lake report and orders issued in 2012, which called for the maintenance of shallow spaces, and to see that the ecology of lakes is not hampered. But it is not being followed by engineers. Rejuvenation needs to be

accommodating, but the present system is bad. Small fish species and worms are no longer seen," added Ram Prasad from Friends of Lakes.

Noted birder and photographer Manjunath Prabhakar said that ducks like shoveler, pintail ducks, gargini, common teal duck, pygmy goose, little ringer plover, little stint, wood sandpiper and wabler are also very rare these days. One has to go to the outskirts to spot them.

Birders and locals also rue that in some lakes, like in Doddakallasandra Lake, birds are being attacked by stray dogs.



Mysuru road wore a deserted look with very few people venturing out | EXPRESS

Bengaluru streets empty, as checkpoints pop up

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

WITH Bengaluru going into its second weekend curfew, roads emptied out after Sankranti celebrations.

Police were seen setting up checkpoints and patrols were

conducted as early as 9.30 pm on Friday. Similar to last week, police took strict action against those stepping out without any valid reason. Vehicles, including bikes, were seized by the police for not providing proper details on why the motorists had ven-

tured out. Even autorickshaw drivers took particular care to ensure that their passengers have good reason to be out. This is because during the last weekend, some autorickshaws were seized for ferrying passengers without genuine reasons.

Buses continued to run at 10% capacity, with conductors taking extra precautions to check passenger IDs and other documents before letting them board. Passengers were allowed based only on seat availability.



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AMID SURGE IN COVID CASES, EC EXTENDS BAN ON RALLIES

On a day India recorded over 2.6 lakh new Covid cases, the EC put roadshows on hold in the five poll-bound states till Jan 22

ALLOWS INDOOR MEETINGS WITH 300 PEOPLE

Though the Election Commission on Saturday extended the ban on physical rallies including *padayatra*s by a week, it has granted some relaxation to political parties. It has allowed them to conduct indoor meetings as long as there was a "maximum of 300 persons or 50% of the capacity of the hall or the prescribed limit set by the State Disaster Management Authority"

'ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH COVID NORMS'

■ The poll watchdog, criticised for inaction during the second wave, held virtual meetings with health ministries and chief secretaries of UP, Goa, Manipur, Punjab and Uttarakhand
■ It has asked parties to follow Covid norms and asked state and district administrations to ensure compliance with them

JAN 22

EC WILL REVIEW PANDEMIC SITUATION AND ISSUE FRESH INSTRUCTIONS IN A WEEK

OBC, SC names dominate BJP's UP list

44 OBC, 19 SC candidates in first list of 107 names for initial two phases; 20 sitting MLAs dropped

MANISH ANAND @ New Delhi

THE Bharatiya Janata Party's first list of 107 candidates for Uttar Pradesh, including chief minister Yogi Adityanath from his traditional Gorakhpur constituency, unveiled the BJP's mega outreach to other backward classes (OBC) and scheduled castes (SC) with 59% of the nominees for the initial two phases of polls hailing from these two categories.

The party also sent out a loud message that it is unfazed by the desertion of big OBC names, denying tickets to 20 sitting MLAs, or one-fourth of the first list. Sixty-three sitting MLAs have been fielded again.

By nominating the CM from Gorakhpur, not Ayodhya as was widely speculated, the BJP brass also put its stamp on the leadership of the UP polls clear, tasking Yogi to defend the eastern front and reserving the temple pivot exclusively for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gorakhpur is a saffron bastion, the party having won from there for decades.

While announcing the first list on Saturday, Union minister and the BJP's election in-charge for UP Dharmendra Pradhan said the party would contest the elections in alliance with the Apna Dal and the Nishad Party. The BJP has withheld the name of one candidate for the first phase of polls in 58

constituencies and seven out of the 55 seats in the second phase.

Sticking with the strategy to give the BJP a big OBC makeover, the party fielded 44 candidates from those caste groups in the first list, besides 19 from the SC category.

Ten women candidates also found a place in the first list of candidates, which included former Uttarakhanda governor Baby Rani Maurya from Agra constituency, where she had previously been a mayor. The list also included Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya from Sirathu in Prayagraj district. The BJP has affirmed its trust in Adityanath's ministers, making it clear that the saffron outfit will be seeking a positive mandate for Team UP.

Bhim Army chief not to ally with SP

Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad, whose Azad Samaj Party was in talks with Akhilesh Yadav's SP, has now said he will try to form a third front. Reports said there was a rift over the number of seats. "We thought this is a new SP. We wanted unity of the *bahujans* and we were banking on him (Akhilesh), but yesterday we felt that our hopes had been shattered," Aazad said on Saturday | P8

Cong first list for Punjab has Sidhu stamp, no ticket for CM's brother

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

THE Punjab Congress stuck to the one-family, one-ticket formula and dropped four sitting MLAs in the first list of 86 candidates announced on Saturday. Among the prominent names on the list were CM Charanjit Singh Channi from Chamkaur Sahib and state Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu from Amritsar (East).

The list has Sidhu's stamp as Malavika Sood, sister of actor Sonu Sood, and singer Sidhu Moosewala were fielded from Moga and Mansa respectively. Both had joined the party recently following Sidhu's lobbying.

Sources said there was disagreement on eight seats between Sidhu and the CM as both wanted tickets for their supporters. But, Sidhu appears to have prevailed. Channi was seeking a poll ticket for his younger

brother from Bassi Pathana but the sitting MLA has been retained. Channi was also pushing for Nimisha Mehta from Garhshankar but Punjab Youth Congress leader Amarpreet Lally was picked instead.

The party has given tickets to several relatives of senior leaders. Among them are Sandeep Jakhar, the nephew of former state unit president Sunil Jakhar, and Mohit Mohindra, the son of Cabinet minister Brahm Mohindra. Further, two MPs managed to get seats for their sons.

All Cabinet ministers have been retained in the first list that has nine women candidates (10.4%) and 15 new faces. A senior party leader said the list reflected Sidhu's formula. As a result, a dozen leaders who wanted tickets for their relatives, including Channi and a few sitting Cabinet ministers, were denied the privilege.



ALL FIRED UP!

A bull jumps over a fire as part of Makara Sankranti festivities at Siddalingapura near Mysuru on Saturday. The ritual, 'Kichchu Haisodu', when cattle jump over bonfires, marks the first day of Sankranti and the last day of the month of Margashirsha. It is a centuries-old belief that the cattle will remain free of disease for the whole year if the ritual is performed | UDAYSANKAR S

Karnataka may soon overtake other states in daily Covid cases

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WITH Karnataka recording the sharpest single-day spike of 32,793 new cases on Saturday, a 14.16 per cent jump from 28,723 cases a day earlier, it stood among top three states that are leading the Covid surge in the country. The daily positivity rate too went up to 15 per cent from 12.98 per cent.

Delhi and Maharashtra are the other two states that are on top. But Delhi on Saturday reported 1,887 cases lesser than Friday, while Maharashtra added only 9,836 cases to the previous day's tally. With Karnataka yet to see the peak, experts fear that the State may soon be the highest contributor of Covid cases in the country.

"The state will reach its peak only by this month-end or early next month and cases could reach 1.2 lakh per day. Other places in the state too are reporting a surge. The city is expected to see 45-50,000 cases," said an expert from the Technical Advisory Committee.

But hospitals may not be burdened this time as compared to last year, as the infection seems milder in the Omicron-driven third wave, he said. The state could see around 8 lakh active cases at its peak, but most patients would be under home isolation, he added.

"We expect the peak around February first week. We are mandatorily giving medical kits to all

those under home isolation," Health Commissioner D Randeep said. As in earlier two waves when Bengaluru was the epicentre at the beginning, Covid cases and test positivity rate are increasing in neighbouring districts too. While Bengaluru led with 22,284 cases on Saturday, Tumakuru district recorded its highest single-day spike of 1,326 cases, Hassan saw 968 cases, while Mysuru and Mandya had 729 and 718 cases. The districts where the test positivity rate has gone above Bengaluru Urban (22.23 per cent) are Ramanagara at 26.72 per cent and Bengaluru Rural at 21.29%.

In anticipation of the peak, the state government has stopped all non-emergency hospital services for the next two weeks. An order was issued on Saturday asking people to refrain from going to hospitals for mild illnesses and follow-up care. Private hospitals too were told to take similar steps.

580 CONTAINMENT ZONES IN BENGALURU

Dists of Concern	Positivity Rate	Cases
Ramanagara	26.72%	122
Tumakuru	19.05%	1,326
Hassan	18.09	968
Mandya	17.29	718
Mysuru	17.06	729
Kolar	15.53	541

Vax helped reduce severity: Virologist

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

EMINENT virologist Dr V Ravi told The New Sunday Express in an exclusive interview that the Omicron variant of Covid, though in a small measure, has taken over in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. "The good news is that most of the patients who have got Omicron have mild illness. I think vaccination has helped in a big way to minimise the severity of the disease and drastically reduce mortality," he added.

With the festive season on, Karnataka may see a rise in the number of Covid cases over the next few weeks. The third wave may start declining by mid-February, but may trail into March, he said. FULL INTERVIEW: P4



SAVIOUR OF STRAYS
P2
WITH THIS ISSUE
MEET THE PAWRENTS
PLUS 12 PAGES
MAGAZINE

Innovating for India, from India, says PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for innovating for India and from India to tackle challenges facing the country as he counted steps taken by the government in freeing entrepreneurs and innovation from bureaucratic silos. "Our startups are changing the rules of the game. I believe that startups are going to be the backbone of New India," he said interacting with youngsters from the world of startups.

Djokovic back in detention in Oz

Melbourne: Novak Djokovic was reported to be back in immigration detention Saturday after his legal challenge to avoid being deported from Australia for being unvaccinated for Covid was moved to a higher court. A Federal Court hearing has been scheduled for Sunday, a day before he was due to begin his title defense at the first Grand Slam of the year. P11

Police plan to appeal bishop acquittal

Kottayam: A day after a Sessions Court here acquitted Roman Catholic Bishop Franco Mulakkal of the charge of raping a nun in a convent in the State, Kerala police on Saturday sought legal advice to move an appeal against the verdict in the High Court. Kottayam SP D Shilpa said they have sought legal opinion from the special public prosecutor.

ON HIS TERMS

Now, Virat Kohli steps down as Test captain

VENKATA KRISHNA B @ Chennai

THE mood in the dressing room was already sombre on Friday. Even as the squad was coming to terms with the series defeat, Virat Kohli broke the news that he would no longer continue as Test captain.

Twenty-four hours later came the confirmation. "Seven years of hard work, toil and relentless perseverance to take the team in the right direction. I've done the job with absolute honesty and left nothing out there. Everything has to come to a halt at some stage and for me as Test Captain of India, it's now," Kohli, who will walk away as India's greatest Test captain in terms

of wins (40), tweeted.

Only four months after relinquishing the T20 captaincy in order to give himself "space to be fully ready to lead the Indian team in Test and ODI cricket", Kohli has had enough. Within the team, the reaction was one of shock, even if it is not something that came out of the blue. In fact, ever since a few senior players expressed reservations over his authoritative style of functioning, those in the dressing room have revealed how the 33-year-old has seldom been his usual self. The tussle with board officials, too, contributed to Kohli's decision. Apart from the disagreement with BCCI president Sourav Ganguly over the



Seven years of hard work, toil and relentless perseverance to take the team in the right direction. I've done the job with absolute honesty and left nothing out there
— Virat Kohli

manner in which he was sacked as ODI captain, it is learnt that board officials have stopped communicating with him. In simple terms, he no longer enjoys the backing of the BCCI.

But Kohli stepped down on his terms. That he no longer had his mentor, Ravi Shastri, also made the decision a lot easier. He leaves a huge void to fill as the Test team, unlike the limited-overs side, doesn't have a ready-made captain in waiting. Either K L Rahul or Rohit Sharma is likely to be the new captain.

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA may seek the help of Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra, who trained in Ballari, and his coach Kashinath Naik, who hails from Karnataka, to train young, talented athletes from the state.

"We hope that Kashinath comes on board. If not as a regular coach, he can be part of the advisory team and train our athletes. Karnataka has all the facilities -- sports residential hostels, talent, equipment and more. What we lag is coaching and we are looking to fill that gap," said Sports and Youth Service Minister Narayana Gowda.



Olympic gold medalist Neeraj Chopra (right) with his coach Kashinath Naik

Taking a cue from Haryana, the state government has asked athletes who represented India in international tournaments and working with various government and public sector companies to train young athletes

from Karnataka.

The Sports Department has called for applications from former athletes and coaches, who participated in the Olympics, Paralympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and other international events.

Narayana Gowda said, "We want to make use of their experience. We have called for applications and they can work on deputation with the Karnataka government, either as full-time coaches or advisors."

The last date for athletes and coaches to apply is January 30. Selected coaches will be paid, he added.

CONTINUED ON: P5



DURATION OF PANDEMIC
1 YEAR, 312 DAYS

CASES REPORTED
Today: 32,793 | Yesterday: 28,723

TALLY
Today: 31,86,040
Yesterday: 31,53,247

DEATHS Today: 7
Yesterday: 14
DISCHARGES Today: 4,273
Yesterday: 3,105

ACTIVE CASES
Today: 1,69,850
Yesterday: 1,41,337

POSITIVITY RATE Today: 5.41%
Yesterday: 5.38%
MORTALITY RATE Today: 1.20%
Yesterday: 1.21%

RECOVERY RATE Today: 93.46%
Yesterday: 94.29%

DISTRICT-WISE COVID CASES
LAST 24 HOURS

Bengaluru Urban	22,284
Bengaluru Rural	503
Bagalkot	106
Ballari	410
Belagavi	393
Bidar	171
Chamarajanagar	93
Chikkaballapur	311
Chikkamagaluru	196
Chitradurga	204
Dakshina Kannada	792
Davanagere	153
Dharwad	618
Gadag	134
Hassan	968
Haveri	17
Kalaburagi	384
Kodagu	150
Kolar	541
Koppal	93
Mandya	718
Mysuru	729
Raichur	109
Ramanagara	122
Shivamogga	305
Tumakuru	1,326
Udupi	607
Uttara Kannada	237
Vijayapura	76
Yadgir	13

COVID BYTES

Priyank Kharge, MLC Rudregowda test positive

BENGALURU, SHIVAMOGGA: Congress leader and former minister Priyank Kharge and MLC S Rudregowda have tested positive for Covid-19. "Missed Covid in the 1st wave, ducked it in the 2nd wave, even had a false positive once. After several negative tests, I have now tested positive for Covid," Kharge tweeted. In a press release, Rudregowda said he has mild symptoms and is doing good. He is under home quarantine and has requested all those who came in contact with him to get tested as per norms. **ENS**

18L people to benefit from Centre's housing scheme

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

IN all, 18.78 lakh people without houses and 6.61 lakh without residential sites will get relief as the Union government has agreed to synchronise the Housing Department data from Karnataka. The Central government had kept the project pending as the data was not uploaded on Awas-plus software. Housing Minister V Somananah has already written to all MLAs to identify beneficiaries in their respective Assembly constituencies and send the list by January 31. Under the programme, each Assembly constituency will get 1,500-2,500 houses. The government aims to construct 5 lakh houses over the next year.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G), which is aimed at rural areas, beneficiaries will get Rs 1.2 lakh. The state government will share 60 per cent of the cost, while the rest will be borne by the Union government. Apart from Rs 1.2 lakh, Rs 30,000 will be given to beneficiaries to construct a toilet and another Rs 10,000 under MN-REGA. The money will be directly credited into the accounts of beneficiaries.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and termed

it a Sankranti gift for the people of the state. He tweeted, "Thank you for approval of synchronisation of 18,78,671 houseless and 6,61,535 site-less households for poor rural people of Karnataka in Awas under PMAY-G, which were long pending."

Replying, Modi tweeted, "Makar Sankranti wishes to my sisters and brothers of Karnataka, a state which makes unprecedented contributions to national progress. The Centre and State Government will keep working for the empowerment of the people of the state."

Later responding to Modi's tweet, thanked Modi and said his words of appreciation and assurance truly fuel his government's efforts to make even greater contributions to national progress.

Housing Department Managing Director Basavaraj said the state conducted a survey in 2018-19 and identified over 18 lakh families without houses. "We had taken their data and uploaded it on software developed by the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Corporation, while the Union Government wanted it on Awas-Plus software. Now that they have given the approval for synchronisation, money will be released to beneficiaries in a phased manner. Every year, a certain number of beneficiaries will get the money," he explained.

SUNDAY INTERVIEW

'THIS WAVE MAY TRAIL INTO MARCH'

CHETANA BELAGERE @Bengaluru

EMINENT virologist, nodal officer the INSACOG lab at NIMHANS, Head of Research and Development, Tata Medical and Diagnostic Centre, Dr V Ravi, in an exclusive interview with *The New Sunday Express*, speaks about the INSACOG's changed strategy and also on how districts in Karnataka will now have to be careful as they will start to peak soon. Excerpts from an interview:

The last time we spoke, you had termed the Omicron variant as Usain Bolt amongst all SARS-COV2 variants. This has now spread across the globe. How much do we know now about the variant?

We have much more information about the variant now. The virus has now spread across to more than 100 countries and in India, it is causing a large number of infections in major metros as of now. We know from genomic sequencing results, even though in small proportions, that Omicron has taken over in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru. The good news amidst the surge, however, is that most of the patients who have got Omicron have mild illness. I think vaccination has helped in a big way to minimise the severity of the disease and drastically reduce mortality. It is still the Usain Bolt of SARS-COV2.

Karnataka is now seeing a surge. Yet we have had several political rallies, fairs, festivities. What are the most likely scenarios over the next two months?

I would like to say wherever there are crowds, especially in closed spaces, the transmission is going to be very high. It is the festive season and people are fed up with restrictions. For the next few weeks, there definitely will be an increase in the number of transmissions. The severity of the disease will be less, but that leaves no room for complacency whatsoever. Bengaluru will peak first and then it will go out to the districts. That is where festivities, travel and rallies are go-



ing to contribute to the migration of the virus, from being a Bengaluru-centric pandemic right now, to other districts.

When will it exactly peak?

Bengaluru will peak in the last week of January and other districts will peak in mid-February. I would say, at the end of February, we will see a decline across the state and Bengaluru will start declining much earlier; and it will probably trail into March. But there may be a tail which will wag till the end of March. How long it will wag is difficult to say.

Now that we know it is an Omicron-driven wave, what is INSACOG going to look at? Are we still sequencing international travellers and clusters?

INSACOG is changing its strategy; it is now going to focus on hospital admissions. We will be sequencing patients with different grades of severity, continue to watch variants and look at clusters in newer areas. For example, right now, it is all city-centric. Once the cases start to move to the districts, we will start looking at clusters in newer samples. Children will now be on the INSACOG radar.

What are we trying to find out from this?

Clinical correlation of genomic sequencing is very important. We will also need to see if there is any evolution of this lineage. As of now, predominantly, the Omicron lineage is producing more or less mild form of disease, but if it does produce severe disease in certain individuals, it will give us some insights into whether comorbidities are responsible for the severity or whether the

lineage itself is evolving into sub-lineages, because there will be mutations continuing to occur in the lineage.

Omicron is evolving? How many sub-lineages we have? I have been associated with the development of the RT-PCR kit known as 'Omisure' and every day we watch out for variants. We know that apart from B.1.1.529, we now have BA.1, BA.2 and BA.3 sub-lineages. While BA.2 and BA.3 are increasingly being reported from some parts of India like the Northeast and Rajasthan in Karnataka, it has predominantly been B.1.1.529, but a few are BA.1 and BA.2 too.

Will we keep needing booster shots?

An honest answer is, I don't know. But the way Omicron is spreading, it will give a booster kind of effect to all those who are vaccinated as well as the unvaccinated, if they get infected. To that extent, we should expect that for sometime, at least after this wave subsides, there will be a lull. Looking at what happened during the Spanish Flu a century ago, it subsided after three waves. This virus comes with surprises. My own guess is another precautionary dose vaccine, as we call it in India, and a booster dose for all should be enough. I think there may not be a need to go on tinkering with the vaccine.

What is the relevance of Omisure to understand the clinical picture?

It is an RT-PCR test that can specifically detect the Omicron variant. It can also detect other SARS-COV2 virus which is not Omicron. This has clinical relevance, especially in those who are hospitalised, to know if it is Delta or any other variant. Delta is still around. It also helps in knowing if monoclonal antibody cocktail drugs can be used for those patients. Also, when you see new clusters in the districts, you want to know if the virus is from the main metro or a new one. If it's not Omicron, then sequencing it will yield faster results to know if it's a sub-lineage of Omicron or a new variant itself.

With peak likely in Feb, officials up vigil on home isolation cases

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

WITH studies indicating that Karnataka may see 1.2 lakh daily cases of Covid-19 during the peak of the third wave, expected in February, of which 90-94 per cent of the patients will be in home isolation, health and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) officials are already on alert.

Though the strategy will not be different from what was followed during the first two waves of the pandemic, officials are taking aggressive measures to check on those in home isolation. As part of their drive, those who have tested positive and are in home isolation can expect more calls from different teams checking on their health status and location.

"We are expecting a peak of 1.2 lakh cases a day in February and even researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have predicted the same. So, measures are being taken up on a war-footing. We are mandatorily giving medical kits to all those in home isolation. This is being done through physical triaging centres," Health Commissioner D Ran-deep said.

Nodal Officer (home isolation) Pankaj Kumar Pandey



A health worker collects swab samples of a man in Bengaluru on Saturday. The city saw 22,284 fresh Covid-19 cases

said that just like the second wave, 10,000 fifth semester medical students will be roped in for Covid-related work this time too.

All preparations are being made as the peak may see eight lakh people in home isolation. This year, so far, 80,000 people have been contacted through tele-triaging. Also, the authorities have visited the homes of 300 to 400 patients as they were incommunicado.

During the second wave, 1.33

lakh calls were made to monitor those in home quarantine. Also, 36,053 patients were given mental health counselling, 1.96 lakh emergencies were identified and 8.08 lakh hospital beds were freed up for those needing them the most.

Palike Chief Health officer Balasundar said, "Staffers are being hired for the post of tele-callers, for triaging centres, to collect swab samples, and for door-to-door visits and vaccination drives. Calls are being made to all those who have tested positive on the first, third, fifth and seventh day by different teams and at different levels depending on the symptoms and their general health condition."

He added that depending on the number of cases, containment zones and geographical area of the ward, zonal commissioners have been given the liberty to hire more staff.

Going by the Union Health Ministry and Indian Council for Medical Research guidelines, medicines in the home isolation kits have also been revised. Two drugs have been removed from the kit and five basic medicines — paracetamol, cetirizine, pantoprazole, vitamin D and C, zinc tablets and cough syrup — have been prescribed.

MATTER OF WORRY

Tumakuru logs 1,326 new cases

ENS @Tumakuru

BENGALURU'S neighbouring Tumakuru district recorded 1,326 new Covid-19 cases on Saturday with a positivity rate of 19.2 per cent. The district's active cases stand at 4,045 of which 67 patients are hospitalised, 23 are admitted in designated Covid-19 hospitals and four are in ICUs.

Taluk health officer Dr Lakshminathan said that no Covid-19 deaths or cases of Omicron variant have been detected in the district.

Top officials including the district surgeon Dr T A Veerabhadraiah, assistant commissioner Ajay and Zila Parishad CEO Vidyakumar who had contracted the virus are working from home. "The target for the district is 10,000 tests per day. The spike may be due to movement of people to neighbouring districts especially Bengaluru city," said an official.

'2.5L healthcare, frontline workers trained online'

BENGALURU: Karnataka has so far trained about 2.5 lakh healthcare and frontline staff through online platforms to effectively leverage technology to fight the Covid-19 battle. "This is a model to the entire country," said Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar, at the inauguration a virtual training program being conducted in association with StepOne for 10,000 medical, dental and Ayush students, on Saturday. **ENS**

Parents tense as over 100 students test +ve in Athani

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Athani, Belagavi

PARENTS and authorities in Belagavi district are worried as over 100 children tested positive for Covid in Athani on Saturday. Most of the children are from rural areas and have reported mild symptoms. All of them are under home quarantine.

Fifteen students and a teacher from the Government High School at Yakkunchi village tested positive. At Banajawad Education Societies Residential Primary, Intermediate and Pre-University College on the outskirts of the Athani, 62 stu-

dents are positive. Two students in the limits of Halyal PHC, seven in Ugar PHC, three in Shivanur PHC and 10 in Anantapur PHC have contracted the virus.

Taluk Health Officer Dr Basagouda Kage and health staff visited the school and college, sanitised the campuses and sealed them. Kage said officials will visit the homes of all children and check their health. A parent, Annasaheb Telsang, said, "The numbers could go up further if schools are reopened on Monday. It should be closed for at least another week or two."

No end to BJP's harassment, says Shivakumar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president DK Shivakumar has said that the ruling BJP government in the state is targeting him by filing cases against him in the wake of the recent padayatra organised by the Congress seeking speedy implementation of the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project.

"My daughter was telling me that they have issued notice to our school. There is no end to the harassment. We will have to live and die with it," Shivakumar told the media.

He also hit out at the government for booking cases against him and other Congress leaders in installments for holding the rally in violation of Covid-19 restrictions. He questioned why no action was taken when ruling party members took part in mass events. "Covid protocols were in place when Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and minister Dr CN Ashwath Narayan visited Ramana-



Congress workers and volunteers clean the road leading to Cauvery Sangama in Mekedatu on Saturday. The route taken during the padayatra - from Mekedatu to Ramanagara - was littered with facial masks, gloves and other plastic items like bottles. Following directives from Congress leaders, including KPCC chief DK Shivakumar, party supporters have started the cleanliness drive. | EXPRESS

gara for a function. Norms were also violated during the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected MLAs at the banquet hall in Vidhana Soudha," he thundered. When questioned on police personnel deployed for the padayatra testing positive, he said as many as 50 teachers lost their lives in by-poll duty in Karnataka.

He said the padayatra has been suspended temporarily respecting the sentiments of the people and will resume after Covid cases decline.

Reacting to former CM and JDS leader H D Kumaraswamy's statement that laborers from Tamil Nadu were hired to organise the padayatra event at Cauvery Sangama, Shi-

vakumar admitted to the allegation, and said, "We are neighbours and our lands are also located in close proximity. Should we fight with each other?" he questioned.

When asked about noted environmentalist Medha Patkar raising her voice against the Mekedatu project over environmental concerns, Shivakumar said the Congress' struggle was a pro-people one as water is the lifeline of people who want the project.

"If at all there should be any opposition, it should be from our side as we, including myself, will lose our land to implement the project. We will struggle seeking better compensation for the land lost. I respect her (Patkar) sentiments. CM Bommai is the ideal person to respond to her concerns," the Kanakapura MLA said.

When his attention was drawn to the suggestion that rainwater harvesting will help Bengaluru quench its thirst, Shivakumar asked the State Government to set up a committee to look in to it.

Govt may collapse if we release proof of graft: Contractors' assn chief

ENS @Tumakuru

THE Karnataka State Contractors' Association on Saturday warned that if evidence related to allegations about 40 per cent commission in public works is released, it may prove the death knell for the Basa-

varaj Bommai-led BJP government in Karnataka.

"As many as four chief engineers of different departments, including PWD and Irrigation, may lose their jobs and over 25 MLAs who were involved, will be exposed", Association president D Kempanna charged at a

press conference on the sidelines of the inauguration of the Tumakuru district unit of the Association. The Association will start a signature campaign, addressing the CM, next week as it had to put off a public rally it had planned in Bengaluru due to Covid-19 situation.

Asked when they will release the evidence, Kempanna maintained that they will do so only after calling on Bommai and PM Narendra Modi, if he gives an appointment in March, and if the meeting does not yield results. "Our demand is to release Rs 26,000 crore due from

the government for works already implemented and to scrap the package system of contract. We are about 17,000 contractors in Karnataka, but 296 contractors from outside are getting 90 per cent of the work under the package system, which is affecting us," he said.

K'TAKA FACES HYDRA-HEADED PROBLEM IN FIGHT FOR WATER



Controversies and disputes over major irrigation projects never die down as political parties try to extract mileage. Successive governments seem to have lacked the will to implement the projects on the ground. In the background of political slugs, the real problems of people needing water for drinking and irrigation remain ignored. While the projects wade through legal hurdles, cost escalation and delays, the intended beneficiaries are left to contend with the long wait for their fruition. The New Sunday Express takes a look at various pending water projects under dispute with neighbouring states and the politics, corruption or problems behind them.

MEKEDATU BALANCING RESERVOIR

Implementing the Mekedatu balancing reservoir (MBR) may not help the ruling BJP expand its vote bank in the Cauvery basin – the bastion of the dominant Vokkaliga community, which has traditionally favoured the Congress or the JDS. But not implementing the project provides scope for anti-incumbency against the ruling dispensation, headed by Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai. This is the crux of the Mekedatu issue as Karnataka prepares for the 2023 assembly polls. Interestingly, the political chemistry at play is seen as an impediment for the project. Tamil Nadu is ruled by the DMK, which is in alliance with the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance. While Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, following the Congress' January 9 padyatra, said that he was committed to implementing the project by taking along the opposition parties, Siddaramaiah has alleged that the BJP is not likely to implement it as it has plans to expand its base in Tamil Nadu. This apart, environmental clearance by the Centre is awaited. Meanwhile, activists have entered the scene by roping in noted environmentalist Medha Patkar to address the issue.

WHAT MEKEDATU IS ABOUT

To collect 67 tmcft of water, if constructed
Estimated project cost as per DPR in 2017: **₹5,912 cr**
Project cost in 2019: **₹9,000 cr**
OTHER FACTORS
12,000 acres of forests to submerge
At least 10 villages to submerge



THE PROJECT

To construct 11 dams on the river Mahadayi/Mandovi

Diversion of water from Kalasa and Banduri nalas

PROJECT AIM

To bring water to drought-prone regions of Hubballi-Dharwad, Belagavi and Gadag districts by diverting water from the Mahadayi river to the Malaprabha river in Karnataka.



COST

Estimated at be **₹94 cr** in 2000
Cost rose to **₹1,67,730 cr** in 2020

PROBLEM

Goa fears losing its flora and fauna in the region.

KALASA-BANDURI PROJECT

THE Kalasa-Banduri project on the Mahadayi river basin has remained incomplete due to a dispute between Karnataka and Goa. If completed, it will improve drinking water supply to Belagavi, Dharwad, and Gadag districts. However, the issue has been used to gain votes by both the Congress and BJP. During Parliamentary and Assembly polls, the contestants promised to resolve the issue if they came to power. But it is still pending as leaders milk the issue only during run-up to polls. The protesters have met former Chief Ministers Siddaramaiah and B S Yediyurappa several times in Bengaluru, only to return with mere assurances. The Kalasa-Banduri project was planned in 1989 when Goa raised objections to it. The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was set up in 2010 and Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are parties to the tribunal. The Kalasa Nala dam was planned near Kanakumbi village for lifting 1.72 tmcft water for drinking requirements of the Belagavi district, while the Banduri Nala dam was to be constructed at Nerse village for lifting 2.18 tmcft of water for drinking purposes. The Supreme Court has already given clearance to the Kalasa-Banduri project on February 20, 2019 on condition that it should be implemented only after clearance from the Department of Forest and Environment. The State Government had approved funds for the project, but has failed to send a delegation to the Centre and convince it to give clearance for the project, Ashok Chandargi, president, Belagavi District Kannada Organisations' Action Committee, alleges.

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

Envisages lifting of 17.40 tmcft of water in the first stage from Tunga river to Bhadra reservoir

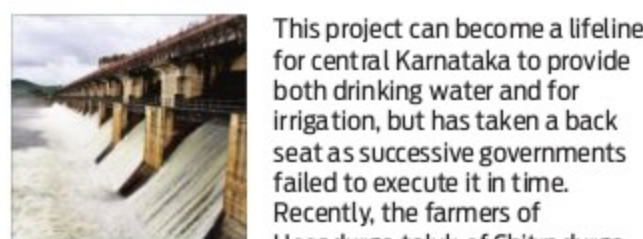
Lifting 29.90 tmcft of water in the second stage from Bhadra reservoir to irrigate 2,25,515 hectares by micro-irrigation in Chitradurga, Davanagere, Tumakuru and parts of Chikkamagaluru.

Also envisages 6 tmcft of water for filling 367 tanks.

PROJECT COST

Commenced in 2008 at estimated cost of **₹500 cr**
Delays in implementation has escalated cost to **₹16,125 cr**
Only **₹4,565 cr** worth of works completed so far

UPPER BHADRA PROJECT



This project can become a lifeline for central Karnataka to provide both drinking water and for irrigation, but has taken a back seat as successive governments failed to execute it in time. Recently, the farmers of Hosadurga taluk of Chitradurga district took out a padyatra demanding completion of the Upper Bhadra project work on priority and ensure water for drinking and for irrigation to the farming community of Chitradurga, Davanagere, Tumakuru and parts of Chikkamagaluru. Work on both sides of the Bhadra reservoir Project, which is the link between Tunga river and the Vani Vilas Sagar dam, has to be taken up immediately to ensure drinking water as well as to irrigate 2.25 lakh hectares in the command area of the UBP. Whereas other irrigation projects face problems of water sharing between Karnataka and other states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Goa, there is no problem in implementing the UBP.

HEMAVATHI PROJECT

Multi-village schemes to provide drinking water from Hemavathi river to villages are pending due to funds crunch. At least two hoblis in each constituency in Hassan district are included under a multi-village scheme. Dudda and Shantigrama hoblis have been awaiting drinking water through the scheme since a year. The scheme was sanctioned by HD Kumaraswamy during the Congress-JDS coalition government but failed to complete it in a time-bound manner. Hurdles include land acquisition delays in parts of Belur and Arasikere taluks and fund crunch. The Kachenahalli, Kamasamudra, Konanuru and Mallipattana lift irrigation projects are stalled due to political reasons. The projects were sanctioned during Congress and Congress-JDS coalition governments.

(With inputs from K Shivakumar in Mysuru; V Velayudham in Kolar-Chikkaballapur; Tushar Majumkar in Belagavi; Devaraja Hirehalli in Bengaluru; Raghu Koppur in Gadag; B R Udayakumar in Hassan; Mahesh Goudar in Bagalkot/Vijayapura; and Ramachandra Gunari in Shivamogga)

Five held for robbing house posing as cops

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

MAHALAKSHMI Layout police have arrested a gang of five, including two habitual offenders for robbing a house. The gang also abducted the house owner and his son. The gang had searched the house posing as policemen and escaped with gold ornaments and cash. Police have recovered valuables worth Rs 16 lakh, including 318 gam gold ornaments, Rs 10.3 lakh, two bikes and a knife from the accused.

The accused are Balakrishna, (23), Chethan Kumar, (27), both rowdy sheeters in Bagalagunte and Yelahanka police station limits and their associates Punith, (24), Prithvi (23), and Rohan, (24).

The prime accused Rohan is a photographer in a private studio and is related to the victim Sou-

mya Naik, a civil engineer. Needing financial assistance for his business venture, he approached Naik and he refused to give the money. An upset Rohan then hatched the robbery plan and three of his associated barged into the house in Subramanya Nagar on December 31.

The gang claimed they were officials of the Tipatur police. They accused Naik of committing burglary and searched the house with a knife point. Meanwhile, Rohan and another associate were standing outside the premises to watch the movements of the neighbours.

The accused also kidnapped Naik and his 20-year-old son. Fearing that they would be caught the gang abandoned the duo and escaped.

Efforts are on to track down one more accused.

CRIME PATROL

Armed man robs bank manager

Bengaluru : An unidentified man posing as a customer robbed a bank manager at BTM Layout on Friday. The accused barged into the manager's cabin, threatened him at knife point and snatched his gold chain and Rs 3.7 lakh cash. Only two staff members were present in the bank. Based on CCTV footage, Madiwala police are searching for the accused who was speaking in Kannada. So far no clues have been found, the police officer added. **ENS**

Fire mishap at shopping mall

Bengaluru: A fire broke out in the storage area in South India Shopping Mall at Arakere on Bannerghatta Road early Saturday morning. Seven fire tenders doused the fire which broke out due to suspected electric short circuit. However, no casualties were reported. Goods and furniture worth several lakhs were gutted. No one was injured as the shop had shut down its operation due to weekend curfew. **ENS**

Thief falls from first floor, dies

Bengaluru: A 37-year-old thief fell to his death while committing burglary in Wilson Garden on Saturday. He was under the influence of alcohol when the incident occurred. The deceased has been identified as Thomas M, a resident of Siddapura. Thomas was involved in several house theft cases in and around the city. A police officer said a woman noticed him and Thomas tried to run by jumping houses and fell on a shed. He had severe head injuries and died on the spot. **ENS**

Aiming at one sport per district: Minister

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

KARNATAKA has studied the model from Haryana, which has been doing well in sports. Last year, India won 19 medals in Olympics and Paralympics, of which nine came from Haryana including the gold for Neeraj Chopra in javelin throw.

The minister explained that he wants one coach per district. "We are also aiming at one sport per district. Whoever is interested in a particular sport can go to that district, join our sports hostel and train," he added.

Job reservation for sportspersons in all depts

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, in the state budget, is expected to announce job reservation for sportspersons in all government departments. At present, there is a 2 per cent reservation in the police department. Bommai is also expected to reserve 50 per cent of jobs for sports persons in the Sports Department.

YETTINAHOLE PROJECT

The Yettinahole river is one of the main feeders of Netravati river, and the Yettinahole project was planned to divert excess rainwater from the Western Ghats to the parched districts Kolar and Chikkaballapur. But it has not borne fruit for almost eight years due to hurdles, including land acquisition. On the other hand, the people of Kolar and Chikkaballapur say apart from technical and other issues, politics is at play with none of the governments keen on providing drinking water to parched Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts. Former Union Minister M Veerappa Moily blames the BJP government for lacking interest in taking up the project on a priority basis. "It is not a big issue for the state government, but the BJP government is neglecting it," he says. But R Anjaneya Reddy, president of Saswatha Neeravari Horata Samithi, says the project is totally unscientific and not feasible. He alleges that despite being unscientific, the government is taking up the project to benefit contractors, and questions how water can be drawn to 265 km to Kolar and Chikkaballapur which are at the tail-end of the project.

KABINI SECOND STAGE PROJECT



The Kabini Stage-II Irrigation Project, which was a promise to the people in the late 1980's to irrigate drought-hit areas of undivided Mysuru district (now Chamarajanagar district) has remained a distant dream even after three decades. The Cauvery water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is to blame as the neighbouring state has opposed expansion of irrigation projects in Karnataka. Successive governments have not pursued the project as they feared that execution or expansion of irrigation projects will attract the ire of the Supreme Court and Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal. The execution of the Kabini Stage-II project would not only have changed the political equations, but also the local economy, employment and addressed the poverty of the backward region to a large extent. The Janata Dal government headed by J H Patel first tapped the river to provide drinking water to Gundlupet and Chamarajanagar taluks.

2 get jail for filing pleas against Wipro

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court convicted two Chennai-based representatives of 'India Awake For Transparency Private Limited' for contempt of court and sentenced them to simple imprisonment of two months with a fine of Rs 2,000 each.

The two, R Subramanian and P Sadanand, filed several frivolous petitions against the amalgamation of three Azim Premji Group companies with another firm on absurd grounds, the court said.

A division bench of Justices B Veerappa and KS Hemalekha passed the order, allowing the criminal contempt petition filed by Hasham Investment and Training Company, Wipro and Azim Hasham Premji, Founder-Chairman of Wipro Group against the duo. The court restrained Subramanian and Sadanand from initiating any legal proceedings against the complainants and their group of companies before any court, tribunal, authority or forum.

It also directed the Registrar (Judicial) to prepare a warrant of com-

mitment and detention under Rule 16(1) of the High Court of Karnataka and take further action against them to undergo punishment.

"It is undisputed fact that the accused persons filed repeated writ petitions, writ appeals etc., in the name of non-existing company - 'India Awake for Transparency' without using the words 'Private Limited', is nothing but a brazen suppression of identity and impersonation done only with a view to mislead this court (judiciary)," the court said.

40 SWR trains turn green, gain more passenger seating

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

AS many as 40 South Western Railways (SWR) have been made environmental friendly by employing head-on-generator (HOG) technology. The new technology also allows to cut fuel consumption and costs.

Indian Railways introduced HOG technology on trains, with the tech being incorporated by SWR in November 2019. As of January 2022, 40 trains that are part of the SWR network utilize the technol-

gy that cuts the consumption compared to the High-Speed Diesel (HSD) that the trains predominantly use. In the month of December alone, the railways reported a saving of Rs 6.93 crore. The total savings in 2021 came up to Rs 70.12 crore.

The trains that make use of the technology include twenty KSR Bengaluru trains and 18 Yeswanthpur trains. Four of the Yeswanthpur trains, going to Lucknow and Mangaluru, had been converted in December.

TN to install statue of Mullaiperiyar dam builder in England

ENS @Chennai

The Tamil Nadu government will install a statue of **Colonel John Penny-cuik**, the British engineer who built the Mullaiperiyar dam, in his native town

of Camberley in England, announced Chief Minister MK Stalin. Tamils in Camberley have obtained permission from St Peter's Church for installing the statue in a park there.



In a statement Stalin said, "I am happy to make this announcement about installing his statue at his native town on his birth anniversary." He recalled how Penny-cuik

built the Mullaiperiyar dam, which is considered the lifeline of many southern districts amidst many hindrances, by spending his own money.

Because of Penny-cuik's hardwork, the Mullaiperiyar dam was completed in 1895, said Stalin.

The Chief Minister also recalled that Tamils in the southern districts have been celebrating his birth anniversary grandly every year.

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NOTICE
The State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority, Karnataka (Constituted by Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India) has accorded Environmental Clearance for Residential Apartment Project (236 flats) at Municipal No. 5811/172/79/4, Allalasandra Village, Yelahanka Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, Bangalore Urban District of M/s. Vista Spaces Jakkur Residency Pvt. Ltd., #11, III Floor, Diamond House, Primrose Road, Bangalore - 560 025 vide letter No. SEIAA 98 CON 2021 (EC identification no. EC22B038KA156838) dated 10th January 2022.
The said copy of Environmental Clearance is available with the website of the MoEFCC/SEIAA, Karnataka at <http://seiaa.karnataka.gov.in/> or <http://environmentclearance.nic.in/>

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Engagement of Assistant Coordinator (Programmes) in Indian Academy of Sciences on contract basis.
Applications from eligible candidates are invited for selection of a suitable candidate for appointment of Assistant Coordinator (Programmes) on contract basis. Details can be seen at the Academy website ie., https://www.ias.ac.in/About_IASc/Positions_Available/
Place: Bengaluru
Date: 14.01.2022
Executive Secretary

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I don't think rock 'n' roll is necessarily a young man's game.

Adam Clayton

STATES, NOT JUST BUDGET, HOLD KEY TO GDP GROWTH

THIS year India celebrates 75 years of Independence from Britain. Yet, the Union Budget continues to harbour a colonial aura even as it charms and courts centralised hope. Budget day continues to symbolise an annual event, a hit or miss opportunity for transformation.

On February 1, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for the fifth time. Typically, the event is preceded by speculation and suggestions on how to propel GDP growth, and followed by analysis and criticism of met and unmet expectations.

The fundamental truth about India's economic growth is embedded in the structure of the nation. Article 1 of the Constitution states "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States" and the gross domestic product of the political economy is effectively the sum of the output of all the states, essentially an outcome of what states manage to do with the resources garnered and allocated.

Indeed, the resources for enabling the virtuous cycle of economic output — generating jobs, income, consumption, investment and growth — are largely vested with the state governments. Between them, the central and state governments spent (in developmental and non-developmental expenditure) over ₹64.70 lakh crore. Of this, over ₹42.11 lakh crore was with the state governments and even the balance is spent by state governments at the direction of the central government.

Effectively, the magnitude of the bang for every buck of national resources depends on the state governments — on what is the level of financial freedom the states bestow on residents and what is the absorption capacity they create for investments. The quantum of quantitative and qualitative change for individual and institutional transformation depends on the enlightened policies on the ground.

Take the headline grabbing event of the past week and the debate about the exit of nearly a dozen MLAs and ministers from the BJP in the run up to the Uttar Pradesh polls. The exodus has acquired a ring of enquiring enigma given the fact that those exiting are from the socially backward classes. Arguably, one of the causes for the disaffection among the disadvantaged classes stems from unevenness of economic opportunities. The cause of real and perceived grievances can only be addressed by the policies designed by the state government — on social justice or job reservations. There is little the February 1 speech of the Finance Minister can do very little to alleviate the angst and anxiety.

The arteries and capillaries which fuel economic activity are vested with the state governments who govern virtually every square yard of the country and determine the velocity and magnitude of economic multipliers. The realisation of the promise of prosperity depends on how well state governments are able to deploy capital and available land resources to leverage labour for output.

For instance, one of the issues haunting investment is the availability of land — and states like Tamil Nadu have harnessed provisions in the Constitution (Article 254) to fine-tune provisions to make land available. Rigidities in labour laws have constrained job creation and expansion of industrialisation. India's statute books host over three dozen labour laws and the states many more — Maharashtra, for instance, has over 50 labour laws. Recently, the central government has compressed the complexities and codified the labour laws. Reforms depend on the states but few states have shown the inclination to adopt them.

India is on the global radar as an emerging start-up economy with over 40 billion dollar unicorns. The question states must ask is why only Pune or Bengaluru carry the halo of start-up hubs. Urbanisation is known to be a force multiplier for economic growth. Jobs in the real estate and construction sectors are located squarely at the intersection of urban and rural economies and create an opportunity for seasonal and permanent employment. The opportunity is not unknown yet state governments have balked at converting Census Towns into urban metros to create new smart cities. The BJP currently runs double-engine governments in 18 states and could have led by example in states it is in power.

One of the shibboleths entrenched in the narrative of economic reforms is that India's transformation depends on what is designed in Delhi. But, history validates that some of the major transformations were conceived in the states. The White Revolution, which catapulted India to the top rank as a milk producer, came from Gujarat. The mid-day meals scheme, which accelerated enrolment and literacy, was born in Tamil Nadu. The MGNREGS was derived from the 1970s employment guarantee scheme of Maharashtra. States can engineer and the Union government can facilitate it.

In India's continental economy, the central government through the union budget has a critical role to play. It can design the budget to create the incentives — through investment, taxation and subvention. It could conceivably assume the role of the incubator to facilitate growth. In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had articulated the idea of Team India for economic prosperity. The idea deserves renewal.

A WELCOME BOOK OF ASSERTIVE HISTORY

POINT OF VIEW

T J S GEORGE

A remarkable anthology has come out. It is misleadingly titled as "Two hundred years of English prose." The main title of the book is just as erroneous: "The Book of Indian Essays."

This book is more than just "English prose" and "Indian essays." It is an assertive history of India, outlined by some of the best thinkers of our time — from Aubrey Menen and G V Desani to Santha Rama Rau and Nissim Ezekiel. A statement in the blurb puts it in perspective: "A literary anthology also works as an alternative history. This volume resembles a map of middle class India's social life and aesthetic sensibilities from hybrid perspectives... The essays amuse, surprise, edify."

How can it not? Basic human nature urges people to listen to what they should not. A western source quoted approvingly by editor Arvind Krishna Mehrotra says: "Stare; pry; listen; eavesdrop. Die knowing something." It is more likely that you will live a lively life "knowing something."

The thinkers included in this anthology are among this century's most irrepressible provocateurs. Consider for

example Aubrey Menen, whose second name Menen is not far removed from Menon. (Salvator Aubrey Clarence Menen was born in London and died in Trivandrum in 1989.) The Ramayana as told by Aubrey Menen was published in 1954 and remains banned in India to this day. The ban is because the unorthodox depictions of Dasaratha, of Sita-Ravana relations and of Lakshmana are considered unacceptable to the average Indian. C Rajagopalachari described the book as "nonsense, but of the unreadable kind, that is, pure nonsense."

If ultra-conventional ideas find the ir space, so do unorthodox ones. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay examines how "English Civilisation has pulled down the 330 million deities of Hinduism, and set up its own tutelary deities, Comfort and his brother Respectability." Some precious points are made by Rabindranath Tagore. Such as: "We find men more and more convinced of the superior claims of Christianity, merely because Christian nations are in possession of the greater part of the world."

That has been a point of discussion in India ever since colonisation began. The "India Gazette" of February 1830 showed how the Pope, sitting in the Vatican in Rome, was a virtual ruler of the world. He was in a position to order that, should the natives of newly discovered colonies be ready to embrace

Christianity, all would be well. "Otherwise new settlers were authorised to extinguish a whole race totally barbarous and unchristian." Imagine The Pope with the power to kill a whole race in its entirety.

Other "essays" in the collection may not be as provocative but that does not stop them from being stimulating. There is Salim Ali explaining how "the Crow is a born opportunist." There is the inimitable G V Desani describing how "I

also as one who "had only basic schooling, no college and never married."

In the 1950s he moved to Bombay, perhaps with plans to make something of his Indian identity. Nothing came of that. Those were my Bombay days and we became close friends. I remember arranging a luncheon meeting for him with a bunch of Bombay celebrities. Govind Desani didn't click in Bombay. He merely got accepted as an erratic genius. He celebrated Varanasi by saying things like: "There are experts living in this city who can guarantee to murder anyone unseen, and within the stipulated period, for so much down payment and the balance on conclusion."

Aubrey Menen is delightful when he describes how his grandmother in Kerala received people formally, "that is to say, with her breasts completely bare. In her view, a wife who dressed herself above her waist could only be aiming at adultery." Menen put it bluntly when he said: "The simple idea that first led monks to turn their backs on civilisation was Heaven. Heaven was a place much better than Rome."

Mehrotra has included quite a galaxy of irresistibles in his anthology. Mukul Kesavan on The Ugliness of the Indian Male, Dom Moraes on God, M Krishnan on the Jallikattu, Francis Newton Souza on Nirvana of a Maggot. In all, 440 pages of pure delight. Will Mehrotra come out with another volume?

Material, quite rich, is waiting.



The thinkers included in this anthology are among this century's most irrepressible provocateurs. Consider for example Aubrey Menen, whose second name Menen is not far removed from Menon.

learned in Varanasi to be buried underground for half an hour. It is a trick. The non-breathing condition is achieved by concentrating upon a fixed image. I concentrated on the image of a former girlfriend. The guru, in the next pit, was concentrating on 'God', he said."

Desani, famous for All About H Hatter and Hali, is described as "a British Indian novelist, poet and social commentator, born in Kenya, reared in India and came of age in Britain." And

HOW HEALTH NEEDS EDUCATION & KNOWLEDGE



OPINION

K SRINATH REDDY

President of Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)
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A good quality education is the foundation of health and well-being. For people to lead healthy and productive lives, they need knowledge to prevent sickness and disease." This declaration by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) further affirms that "education is a catalyst for development and a health intervention in its own right." The Incheon Declaration of 2015 on Sustainable Development Goal 4 affirms that education endows the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, and make informed decisions. Contrariwise, ill health impedes access to education and attainment of knowledge and skills.

A wealth of evidence, from comparisons within and across countries, testifies to the positive impact of education on health status of individuals and populations. Higher levels of education usually provide greater access to health-related information which, when assimilated and stored as knowledge, can promote and sustain healthy behaviours. Education also increases opportunities for higher income employment. Better economic status, in turn, enables a person to afford more nutritious and safe food, live in better housing with assurance of clean water, sanitation amidst healthier physical and climatic surroundings.

Higher income, coupled with good education, also enables one to access better healthcare. Health seeking behaviours, insurance literacy, ability to engage in participatory decision making with the doctor, adherence to treat-

ment and capacity for self-care are all better with higher levels of education. Worldwide, unhealthy behaviours like tobacco consumption and alcohol abuse are inversely correlated with educational status. Such social gradients, across the levels of education, are most evident within individual countries while other differences dilute the association in inter-country comparisons.

While education and income often go together as positive determinants of health, education has a greater impact on health than income. Even a financially well-off person will not make healthy choices related to food, exercise or addictive behaviours, if education does not provide the requisite knowledge. On the other hand, an educated person is more likely to adopt healthy behaviours and make healthy food choices, even within the constraints of limited income. At any given level of income, higher education offers better health protection. Ideally, healthy behaviours are most likely to be adopted when health literacy provided by education is supported by lowering of financial and access barriers to health promoting agents and environments.

However, these relationships are not wholly independent, always linear or universal. The many centenarians of Hunza Valley are healthy not because of high educational attainment but because of a pristine environment and healthy traditional diets. Other communities too derive health benefits from traditional diets and herbal medicines. In such cases, it is not the knowledge gained through formal education which promotes and protects health but tacit knowledge and experiential wisdom that provide the health benefit. While knowledge is gained most easily from structured formal education, there are also other channels for acquiring health friendly knowledge. Mass media also help to quickly disseminate health relevant knowledge to a large number of persons whose formal education may be varied.

The positive relationship of education with health was clearly evident in the 20th century. However, the rapid growth of social media in the 21st century, is blurring the benefit. The best case scenario is of widespread rise in



While education and income often go together as positive determinants of health, education has a greater impact on health than income. Even a financially well-off person will not make healthy choices related to food, exercise or addictive behaviours, if education does not provide the requisite knowledge.

health and nutrition literacy through print, electronic and social media. While it is happening to some extent, the infiltration of fake news and anti-science propaganda into the social media has proved harmful to adoption of healthy behaviours. This has been painfully evident during the Covid pandemic. Highly educated persons became the prejudiced purveyors and deluded victims of false information, while the less educated were willing to trust health workers.

For education, formal and informal, to positively impact health behaviours of a large number of people, we need to both raise the level of formal education by improving its access and quality as well as fast track health and nutrition

literacy among the general population. The content of the educational messages must be founded on science, while taking into account the specific health needs and cultural practices of the population groups being addressed. Credible agencies and individuals must be engaged to quickly counter and contain fake news.

Educational institutions can transform students into agents of health promotion. School and college students who are sensitised to health issues and motivated to adopt healthy behaviours can also become change agents in the family, neighbourhood and the wider community. Two school-based voluntary groups HRIDAY (Health Related Information Dissemination Among Youth) and SHAN (Student Health Action Network) have demonstrated high impact in Delhi, in promoting tobacco control and adoption of healthy behaviours. The former engages students of Classes 6-8 in peer led health education ("Learning The Fact") while the latter enables students of Classes 9-12 to debate and disseminate policy recommendations that can advance health through multi-sectoral actions ("Learning To Act").

An educated and engaged younger generation can power health transformation in the country.

QUOTE CORNER

Iran has always been committed to pay for its membership on time and we have shown this in action before. Unfortunately, for the second year, we are facing hurdles in making our payments and that is because of the cruel US sanctions.

Majid Ravanchi, Iran's permanent UN representative

The big threat is Ethiopia's blockade of humanitarian assistance that is desperately needed by millions of people. This is a classic case of collective punishment. This is not punishing Tigrayan forces. It is punishing the people.

Kenneth Roth, Human Rights Watch executive director

I'm just a player seeing the circus from the outside. But, as I said, I am a little bit tired of this matter. I think it went too far. I wish Novak (Djokovic) all the very best. And that's it, I want to play tennis.

Rafael Nadal, Spanish tennis star

MAILBAG WRITE TO

letters@newindianexpress.com

Talks can end Cauvery dispute

Those who criticise the Congress padayatra must recall the long walk undertaken by SM Krishna when he was the Congress Party chief minister of Karnataka over the sharing of Cauvery waters with Tamil Nadu. As articulated by Deve Gowda, interstate water disputes cannot be resolved by padayatras but by mutual discussions and a bit of give and take in the interests of the people and not by agitations that take us nowhere. Strifes do not result in any tangible results.

V Padmanabhan, Bengaluru

Sanitising fake information

This is with reference to 'Misinformation, mental well-being and third wave' (Jan 15). Apart from the information overload and a lack of concerted crisis communication, an infodemic is also brewing all over the world. A lot of misinformation is spreading along with the pandemic making people pan-

icky and mentally stressed. Large scale mistrust and vaccine hesitancy occur due to the spreading of cooked up stories. Digital distancing and fact checking are required before accepting any information especially before sharing it to the world. Every piece of information must be taken with a pinch of salt as a result of the information overloads.

M Haneef, Kottayam

Colleges are not for politics

This is with reference to 'End culture of political violence in Kerala campuses'. The editorial hit the nail when it stated that 'a rethinking on the relevance of party-based politics on campuses is needed and that in Kerala politics, murder for ideology is not only justified but even glorified by parties.' It is a bitter truth that campuses are taking after the culture of party villages which in real terms are the hegemonic rule of the CPI-M in such areas. The most unfortunate thing is that the future citizens are condemned to the role of fossils where the hammer of partisan politics rule the roost.

A Raveendranath, Aranmula

Shocking acquittal of bishop

'The miscarriage of justice' could be the apt word to describe the acquittal of Bishop Franco, former head of the Latin Catholic Diocese in the nun rape case involving Lucy Kalapura. The case surprisingly took three long years for the verdict to be delivered, by Kottayam Additional District and Sessions Court Judge G Gopakumar, pronounced the judgment that the "accused is found not guilty". This court verdict will further embolden and legitimise such incidents in seminaries and churches.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

Batsmen failed in S Africa

Congratulations to South African team for their come back series victory against India. It was a failure of our batsmen, especially the top five, which has cost the Test series in South Africa. Our batsmen should learn to be resolute and patient like Peterson, who richly deserved the Man of the Series award. South Africa deserved the series as they held on to even the half chances given by our batsmen, whereas our fielders spilled even the

easiest of catches. Incidentally, the behavior of India captain and vice-captain, on the DRS decision, was deplorable. It is time the selectors analyse the utility of non-performers and give opportunity to young and talented players waiting in the wings.

NV Krishnan, Chennai

Health is primary, not polls

It is strange that the Election Commission is going ahead with elections in five states despite the possibility of triggering mass infections. Putting restrictions on rallies and public meetings is not enough to prevent Covid spread. It is better that the EC postpones the state elections to prevent further Covid spread. Elections may be conducted in a safe, peaceful and healthy democratic environment without any Covid restriction of rallies and public meetings. Further there is no urgency as almost all five Assemblies had not yet completed their five-year terms. Health of the citizens should be given priority over the elections.

T Kaish Ditya, Hyderabad



PM Narendra Modi during his virtual interaction with start-ups, on Saturday | PTI

Jan 16 to become Start-up Day, announces Modi

PM holds interaction with 150 entrepreneurs, says they are the backbone of new India

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced that January 16 will henceforth be called Start-up Day. He interacted with 150 start-ups, vowing to free the entrepreneurs from bureaucratic knots.

Exuding confidence in the young entrepreneurs, the Prime Minister said, "Start-ups are going to be the backbone of new India".

The interaction held through video conference saw presentations on different themes, including the likes of 'Growing from Roots', 'Nudging the DNA', 'From Local to Global', 'Technology of Future', 'Building Champions in Manufacturing', 'Sustainable Development'.

Union Ministers Piyush Goyal, Mansukh Mandaviya, Ashwini Vaisnaw, Sarbananda Sonowal, Parshottam Rupala, G Kishan Reddy, Pashupati Kumar Paras, Jitendra Singh and Som Parkash also attended the interaction session.

"For this culture of start-ups to reach the far-flung parts of

the country, it has been decided to celebrate January 16 as National Start-up Day," said the Prime Minister.

Modi listed three aspects of the changes the government is making to strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship and the start-up eco-system. "First, to liberate entrepreneurship and innovation from the web of government processes, bureaucratic silos. Second, creating an institutional mechanism to promote innovation. And third, hand-holding of young innovators and young enterprises," remarked the Prime Minister.

He cited removing problems of 'angel tax', simplification of tax procedure, arranging for government funding, allowing self-certification of nine labour and three environment laws and removal of more than 25,000 compliances to assert the government bid to promote the entrepreneurs in the country.

"The government's effort is to institutionalise innovation by creating attraction for innovation among students since childhood," the PM said.

SPIKE IN USE OF NAILS BY LEFT EXTREMISTS

SANA SHAKIL @ New Delhi

PUSHED to desperation by a string of successful operations, arrests and killings of top leaders, Maoists are increasingly resorting to using spikes in order to deter security forces from conducting operations in Naxal areas. Use of spikes by Maoists went up by around 12 times last year as compared to 2020, official records accessed by this newspaper show. As a response to this, security forces are now testing anti-spike shoes in the two worst-hit Naxal districts of Sukma and Bijapur.

A total of 9,721 spikes were recovered by security forces from Naxal areas last year, as compared to 813 in the previous year, according to data available with the Union Min-

STATE/UT	2018		2019		2020		2021 (Up to 15.11.2021)	
	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	12	3	18	5	12	4	10	1
Bihar	59	15	62	17	26	8	23	6
Chhattisgarh	392	153	263	77	315	111	214	91
Jharkhand	205	43	200	54	199	39	98	21
Madhya Pradesh	4	0	5	2	16	2	15	3
Maharashtra	75	12	66	34	30	8	28	5
Odisha	75	12	45	11	50	9	30	3
Telangana	11	2	8	2	15	2	3	0
Uttar Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Bengal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kerala	0	0	3	0	2	0	0	0
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	833	240	670	202	665	183	421	130

istry of Home Affairs, which shows that dependence of Maoists on spikes increased significantly last year.

A senior CRPF official, who

is posted in Chhattisgarh, said many troopers have had their feet pierced by 3-4 inch long nails in the last one year, adding that the number of such

injuries has gone up. Naxals use wooden and iron boards with nails which they bury in holes dug roughly a foot deep to prevent troopers from entering deep Naxal pockets.

"The spikes have been discovered in not just random areas in the Naxal affected states but in core Naxal areas where we have recently built security camps and in other Naxal strongholds where more camps are proposed. Naxalism is on the decline and they are using spikes out of desperation," the official explained.

Nail board traps are a cheap, easy option for Naxals for impeding the movement of security forces. When troopers stumble into these traps, rusted nails slice through their feet causing injuries to muscle and ligaments. The injuries

are made worse by the added weight that the troopers carry, like backpacks, arms and ammunition. "These wounds do not kill. But what they do is immobilise the troops and slows down operations, since the other soldiers have to then attend to the injured soldiers," explained a source.

Rise in the use of spikes by Naxal insurgents is being seen in tandem with the growing network of camps laid out in areas formerly occupied by the red extremists. A security expert said spikes are a cheaper alternative to IED, which requires expertise to put together, plant and detonate.

Anti-Naxal operations have seen a string of successes of late, with the arrest of CPI (Maoist) politburo member Prashant Bose.



Parachute regiment personnel display their new combat attire during the Army Day parade in New Delhi on Saturday | PTI

UNIFORM MILITARY CODE

EXPRESS READ

GAIL director booked by CBI

New Delhi: The CBI has booked E S Ranganathan, director (marketing) of GAIL, with several suspected middlemen and businessmen in an alleged case of bribery of over 50 lakh from private companies buying petro chemical products marketed by the Maharatna PSU, officials said on Saturday.

Stamp on women army officers

New Delhi: Army Chief General M M Naravane on Saturday released a postage stamp commemorating permanent commission to women officers in the Indian Army. The Supreme Court in February 2020 had directed the Centre to ensure that women short service commission officers are given permanent commission.

NCM asks Rajasthan for minor girl assault report

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has directed the Rajasthan government to file by a detailed report on the alleged gang-rape of a 15-year-old mentally challenged girl in Alwar. The minorities panel has asked the state's Chief Secretary to list out the preventive measures it plans to take to avoid such incidents in future.

"Chairperson Iqbal Singh Lalpura has taken suo motu cognisance of reports appearing in media regarding sexual assault of a girl reportedly belonging to a minority community at Alwar, Rajasthan, on January 11, 2022. Media reports have mentioned that the specially-abled girl had been missing from her house for several hours before she was spotted on a road in a pool of

blood," the minorities panel said, in a statement.

In the notice to the Rajasthan government, Lalpura asked the state's Chief Secretary to file a detailed response by January 24 and provide details of the arrests made in the case, sections under which the case has been filed and measures taken by the state authorities to prevent such incidents in future.

On January 11 night, the minor girl was found bleeding profusely from her private parts on a flyover in Alwar. According to police officials, the technical evidence and medical report do not suggest the possibility of sexual assault. Senior police officials reportedly said they examined multiple CCTVs at different locations from the victim's home till the starting point of the flyover where the girl was found. She has underwent multiple surgeries.

SC vacancies may lead to rise in pending cases

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

VACANCIES in Supreme Court are soon going to increase the burden of pending cases this year, with eight retirements due, including two Chief Justices of India.

Present CJI N V Ramana, who took over in April 2021, will demit office in August. Justice U U Lalit will be the CJI till November, after which Justice D Y Chandrachud will take over. He will be the CJI till November 2024.

By the time Justice Chandrachud retires in 2024, many judges presently at the apex court would have retired. Justice Chandrachud's father was also a CJI and it will be the first

TWO NEW CJIS IN 2022
(8 SC judges will retire this year)



CJI N V Ramana till August



Justice U U Lalit till November



Justice D Y Chandrachud till Nov, 2024

time that a son would follow his father into the seat.

Justice Sanjeev Khanna will become CJI after Justice Chandrachud and be in office until May 13, 2025. After his retirement, Justice B R Gavai will become the CJI for over six months. He will be the second CJI from the Scheduled Caste

community after Justice (ret'd) K G Balakrishnan. Justice Surya Kant will succeed Justice Gavai in November 2025. He will remain in office till February 2027.

Such short tenure of judges in the top court that is fighting with pendency of over three crore cases will not only ham-

per the chances of clearing the backlog but also reduce the chances for any CJI to implement changes and bring in a policy that will help improve the present system.

This year has already seen the retirement of Justice R Subhash Reddy on January 4. Justice Vineet Saran will retire on May 10, Justice L Nageswara Rao on June 7, Justice A M Khanwilkar on July 29, Justice Indira Banerjee on September 23 and Justice Hemant Gupta on October 16.

With these retirements in line and in case no new elevation at the top court takes place, the total strength of judges will come down to 25, as against the sanctioned strength of 34.

2.68 lakh new cases in 24 hours, positivity rises too

New Delhi: India added 2.68 lakh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, a jump of 5.02 per cent from Friday, taking the active caseload in the country to 14.17 lakh, with a daily positivity rate of 16.66, up from 14.78 per cent. On the day, 402 people died, bringing the total toll to 4.85 lakh. The Omicron variant, pushing the latest Covid wave leading to lockdowns and restrictions in many states, also went up to 6,041 from 5,753. The active cases are 3.85 per cent of the country's total positive cases that stood at 3,68,50,962. The number of patients recovered from the infection stood at 1.22 lakh, around 94 per cent of the active cases. At the same time, the vaccination coverage exceeded 156.02 crores, with more than 58 lakh getting jabbed in 24 hours. In the 15-18 age group, 3.25 crore have been given the vaccine since the country expanded its inoculation effort to protect its adolescent and vulnerable population ahead of the looming Covid wave on January 3. With 16.13 lakh samples tested on Saturday, 70.07 crore tests have been done to date. More than 157.97 crore vaccine doses have been given to the states and Union Territories, said the government.



Bengal civic elections deferred by three weeks

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

THE West Bengal Election Commission on Saturday deferred civic polls in four municipal corporations by three weeks in the wake of the surge in Covid-19 cases. The elections will be held on February 15, instead of January 22.

The decision was taken a day after the Kolkata High Court asked the panel to consider postponing the civic polls. The commission issued the notification postponing the civic polls shortly after the state government informed the court that it had no objection if the electoral exercise is deferred.

Trinamool Congress spokesperson and MP Saugata Roy

welcomed the decision. "The court asked the commission to consider postponing of the civic polls and the decision was taken in the interest for the sake of common people's interest," he said.

The court was hearing a PIL seeking postponement of the municipal elections in Bidhanagar, Chandernagore, Asansol and Siliguri civic bodies.

The BJP said the election commission had to accept their demand for postponement. "With the surge in cases, we demanded it but TMC did not pay heed. After the court directed to consider the election schedule, the state poll panel had no option left," said the party's senior leader Dilip Ghosh.

COVID TRACKER

6,041 Omicron cases in India

5.01% Rise in Omicron

14,17,820

Active cases, highest in 223 days

94.83% Recovery rate

95.20% Recovery rate a day earlier

16.66% Daily positivity rate

14.78% Daily positivity rate a day earlier

1.32% Case fatality rate



Farmer union plans 'Day of Betrayal'

HARPREET BAIWA @ Chandigarh

THE Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has decided to observe a nationwide 'Day of Betrayal' protest on January 31 against the central government's alleged reneging on its assurances to farmers.

It also announced to stay away from fellow unions who would be participating in the Punjab elections

After a meeting at Singhu border on Saturday evening, the Morcha expressed its dismay and anger over the Union government not fulfilling any of the promises men-

tioned in the December 9 letter on the basis of which it had decided to withdraw the agitation against the farm laws.

"No action has been taken by the Union, Madhya Pradesh, UP, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal governments on the promise of immediate withdrawal of the cases during the agitation. The Haryana government has done some paperwork only. The rest have not even received a letter from the Centre," the SKM said.

Uttar Pradesh government has not initiated any action on

giving compensation for the martyred farmers, it said, adding that no announcement was made by Haryana regarding the amount of compensation.

Regarding MSP, it said the government has neither announced the formation of the committee nor given any information about the nature of the panel and its mandate. "To protest against this betrayal, the Morcha has decided that Day of Betrayal will be observed on January 31 across the country. Large demonstrations will be organised at the district and block levels," said senior SKM leader Darshan Pal.



Past shows SP is anti-SC party, says Mayawati

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

AMID several leaders from the BJP shifting allegiance to the Samajwadi Party (SP) saying it worked for the backward classes, BSP chief Mayawati on Saturday mocked them saying the SP's past record showed its "anti-Dalit" approach. The former CM also clarified that she would not contest the Assembly polls, but take the legislative council route, if her party formed government in the Hindi heartland state.

Addressing a press meet on her birthday, Mayawati declared names of 53 BSP candidates for constituencies that would go to the polls in the first phase on February 10. "The SP's past record shows it always took an anti-Dalit approach," Mayawati said. She sought to know why the Akhilesh-led party renamed Sant Ravidas Nagar to Bhadohi soon after assuming power in 2012. "Wasn't this due to its anti-Dalit thinking," she asked.

Citing another example, she alleged that the SP had torn a bill introduced in view of ensuring promotion of Dalits in government services. "The bill remains pending... Doesn't this reflect its anti-Dalit stand?" she said.

The BSP chief's remarks came a day after former cabinet minister and prominent OBC leader Swami Prasad Maurya joined the SP along with another rebel minister Dharam Singh Saini.

With several such defections, Mayawati stressed on strengthening the anti-defection laws. Of the 19 MLAs who had won the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls on BSP tickets, 13 have quit the party. "Considering how some greedy politicians change parties during elections, it is necessary to strengthen the anti-defection laws as such practices adversely impact democracy," she said.

Laughing off the remarks that discount her party out of the race, Mayawati said the BSP will spring a surprise akin to 2007.

With agency inputs

AKHILESH'S PROBLEM OF PLENTY

Turncoats from BJP & other parties, numerous small allies could spell trouble for SP during ticket distribution

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

WITH the recent influx of leaders into the Samajwadi Party, Akhilesh Yadav faces the problem of plenty in ticket distribution. The aspirants include turncoats, allies and his own party men. Sources point out dozens of seats where deciding a nominee would be a tough task for the SP chief.

Akhilesh will have to do a delicate balancing act of keeping his allies happy while, at the same time, taking care of the individual leaders, the prized 'imports.'

The SP has allied with the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), the Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia (PSP-L), the Mahan Dal, the Janwadi Party (Socialist) and the Nationalist Congress Party.

The SP chief on Wednesday held a three-hour meeting with the heads of these parties. This was his first joint meeting with alliance partners. Party insiders said the SP is likely to retain around 350 of the total 403 seats and distribute the remaining 53 among allies in east, west, Rohilkhand and central UP. Sources said the party is likely to keep 18 seats across Bundelkhand with itself.

"About 36 seats will be given to the RLD, 10 to the SBSP, nearly six to the PSP-L and the rest will be distributed among the other partners," said a senior party leader privy to the deliberations at the allies' meeting.

The party has already named KK Sharma, an NCP member, as a candidate from Anupshahr in Bulandshahr district. The BJP had swept all seven assembly segments, including Anupshahr of this district, in previous assembly elections. The SP was pushed to number three and the BSP was the runners-up in 2017.

Though SP and RLD released the first joint list of 29 candidates on Thursday, the RLD and the PSP-L are looking for more seats. The RLD, sources said, wants two seats in eastern UP.

So far, 10 BSP and 13 BJP MLAs, including the two Yogi ministers, have joined the SP. All of them expect the party ticket as they feared denial of nomination in their respective parties. The SP also has made a deal on some seats with the alliance partners to field SP candidates on their symbols and vice-versa.

The SP is likely to oblige the turncoats. However, the heavy influx of leaders and alliance partnerships would deprive many of the party's original leaders of the opportunity to contest the polls on almost 80 seats. This may lead to discontent among the SP cadre as well as those who have recently entered the party. There could be some tricky situations also; for example the curious case of the Nakur assembly segment in Saharanpur.

Dharam Singh Saini, who

quit as a minister in the Yogi government to join the SP, is a two-term sitting MLA from Nakur. He is a strong claimant for this seat with former Congress strongman Imran Masood, who recently switched to the SP, was the runner-up against Saini in Nakur both in 2017 and 2012 elections. Masood is also a strong candidate from the same constituency. Besides, many local SP workers could also be aspiring for the ticket from Nakur seat.

A similar situation is cropping up for the SP chief in over 18 seats where sitting MLAs of the BJP and BSP have joined the SP in recent days.

Bigwig Swami Prasad Maurya, a sitting MLA from Padrauna, will not be much of a problem as SP had stood fourth in 2012 and had given the seat to ally Congress in 2017. Congress stood number three then. So, Maurya would be an obvious choice in Padrauna.

However, Maurya's son Utkrisht could cause some problems from Unchhar constituency. Utkrisht had lost in Unchhar to SP's Manoj Pandey in 2012 and 2017 Assembly elections. He had contested as a BSP candidate in 2012 and as a BJP candidate in 2017 but lost despite a strong Modi wave. It would be tricky for Akhilesh to accommodate both Utkrisht and Pandey.

A senior SP leader said party tickets have not been promised to all newcomers. "Adhyakshaji (president) has been saying that all will get respect. Moreover, seats are not the only op-

SAMAJWADI HEADACHE

SEAT: BILSI, BADAUN	SEAT: BILHAUR, KANPUR RURAL
RADHA KRISHNA SHARMA BJP turncoat now in SP	BHAGWATI SAGAR BJP turncoat now in SP
VIMAL KRISHNA AGARWAL Party hopeful from same seat	SHIV KUMAR BERIA Party hopeful from same seat
● SP FINISHED THIRD	● SP CANDIDATE FINISHED THIRD
SEAT: SHIKOHABAD, FIROZABAD	SEAT: SITAPUR
MUKESH VERMA BJP turncoat now in SP	RAKESH RATHORE BJP turncoat now in SP
SANJAY KUMAR Party hopeful from same seat	RADHEY SHYAM JAISWAL Party hopeful from same seat
● SP RUNNER-UP	● SP RUNNER-UP
SEAT: BIDHUNA, AURAIYYA	SEAT: KHALILABAD
VINAY SHAKYA BJP turncoat now in SP	DIGVIJAY NARAYAN CHAUBEY BJP turncoat now in SP
DINESH KUMAR VERMA Party hopeful from same seat	JAVED AHMAD Party hopeful from same seat
● SP RUNNER-UP	● SP FINISHED FOURTH
SEAT: SITTING MLA OF SP: MANOJ PANDEY 2017 RESULT: SP WON UNCHAHAR	SEAT: TILHAR, SHAHJAHANPUR
WHY THIS SEAT COULD POSE PROBLEM	ROSHAN LAL VERMA BJP turncoat now in SP
SWAMI PRASAD MAURYA WANTS TICKET FOR HIS SON UTKRISHT	● SP DID NOT CONTEST
SEAT: PADRAUNA, KUSHINAGAR	SEAT: NANPARA, BAHRAICH
SWAMI PRASAD MAURYA BJP turncoat now in SP	MADHURI VERMA BJP turncoat now in SP
● SP FINISHED THIRD	● SP DID NOT CONTEST
SEAT: NAKUR, SAHARANPUR	SEAT: TINDWARI, BANDA
DHARAM SINGH SAINI BJP turncoat now in SP	BRUESH PRAJAPATI BJP turncoat now in SP
● SP FINISHED RUNNER-UP	● SP DID NOT CONTEST
SEAT: MADHUBAN, MAU	
DARA SINGH CHAUHAN BJP turncoat now in SP	
● SP FINISHED RUNNER-UP	

tion. The party has other ways of accommodating them like sending them to Rajya Sabha or the UP Legislative Council, giving them chairmanship of various boards of the state

government (minister rank positions), senior party positions and a party ticket for Lok Sabha polls in 2024," the SP leader said, requesting anonymity.

Aazad flays Akhilesh, says third front bid on

LUCKNOW: Azad Samaj Party chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad on Saturday said efforts were being made to form a third front of several opposition parties for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls and if it did not materialise, his party would go it alone.

He also targeted Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. "We thought this is a new Samajwadi Party and there will be some change in it. We can speak about social justice... We wanted unity of the bahujan and we were banking on him (Akhilesh Yadav), but yesterday we felt that our hopes had been shattered," he told reporters here.

"I feel that Akhilesh-ji does not need us. All the best to him... We will fight our own

polls," he added. Aazad said, "The effort is to unite scattered opposition parties and form a third front. Otherwise, after discussions with the core committee of Azad Samaj Party, we will contest the elections on our own."

To a question on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath having food at a Dalit household, he said, "He still considers them (Dalits) as untouchable, hence is trying to prove a point by going and eating there. Why is he not having food at the home of a Brahmin or Thakur. He wants to prove a point that he is giving respect to them by having food with them."

UP goes to Assembly polls in seven phases between February 10 and March 7. PTI

TMC-Cong fight over tie-up continues

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

A war of words has broken out between the Congress and TMC over electoral alliance in Goa with the former alleging that the Mamata Banerjee-led party, rather than taking on the BJP, is helping it by weakening the opposition.

Both the parties took to Twitter with state in-charges of the two parties exchanging barbs over the alliance in the poll-bound state.

This comes even as NCP chief Sharad Pawar has said that the NCP, Congress, and

TMC are in talks for an alliance in coastal state.

Mahua Moitra of TMC had sent feelers to the Congress for a collective fight against the BJP while Congress Goa in-charge Dinesh Gundu Rao rebuked her, saying there is no possibility of an alliance.

"I wonder who among the Delhi leaders' response is Mahua Moitra awaiting. And Trinamool's brilliant strategy to defeat BJP in Goa is to weaken the Congress and divide the anti-BJP vote. Whom does that help Moitraji?" Rao tweeted on Saturday.

This comes after Moitra said

on Twitter that the "TMC already made a formal and definitive offer to Congress in Goa to defeat the BJP and the Congress leadership had sought time to respond two weeks ago".

Earlier, Moitra had tweeted that had the Congress done its duty well in Goa, there would not have been a need to the TMC to come in the state to defeat the ruling BJP.

The TMC has already allied with the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) while the Congress has tied up with the Goa Forward Party. The BJP and AAP are contesting alone in the Goa elections scheduled for February 14.

UTTER PRADESH	MANIPUR	GOA	PUNJAB	UTTARAKHAND
Fresh cases	16,016	15,795	100	87
Deaths	3	4	0	0
Positivity rate	6.3%	6.10%	NA	NA
	3,145	1,710	6,083	6,883
	3	3	21	22
	NA	NA	21.99%	19.46%
			3,200	3,848
			3	2
			11.48%	12.42%

8 die in suspected hooch tragedy in Bihar village

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

IN a suspected case of hooch tragedy, at least eight persons died and another fell sick in Bihar's Nalanda district late on Friday. The victim's family members claimed they died after consuming spurious liquor, however, the cause of death is yet to be officially ascertained.

Though the victims started taking ill at Chhoti Pahari and Pahartali villages late on Friday, the matter came to light on

Saturday morning.

Later, Nalanda district magistrate Shashank Subhankar and superintendent of police Ashok Mishra also visited the affected villages.

DM Subhankar said: "The cause of death will be ascertained after the receipt of the post-mortem report."

The locals alleged that liquor brewing was going on unabated in the area, a charge denied by the police and the officials of the prohibition department.

Dharam Sansad organiser arrested

VINEET UPADHYAY @ Dehradun

YATI Narsinghananda, organiser of Dharam Sansad where alleged hate speeches against Muslims were delivered, was arrested by Haridwar police Saturday late evening. However, according to police sources, he was not arrested for hate speech but for an old case in which he is accused of making derogatory remarks against women. "The case was registered against him in Haridwar this year," said Shekhar Suwal, Haridwar city circle officer.

This is the second arrest of



Yati Narsinghananda

an accused in the Haridwar hate speech after Jitendra Narayan Tyagi was arrested on January 13. Narsinghananda was arrested from Haridwar's Sarvanand Ghat, where he was

sitting on an indefinite hunger strike against the arrest of Jitendra Narayan Tyagi. Earlier on Saturday, a court rejected Tyagi's bail application.

Meanwhile, seers have planned a 'revenge meeting' in response to the arrests and FIRs registered against them in connection with the Haridwar hate speech. The meeting is scheduled to be held at Sarvanand Ghat on Sunday. The seers claimed the meet will be on a larger scale than the Dharam Sansad as religious leaders from across the country will take part in it.

Farming in India headed to dangerous future: Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Ahmedabad

UNION Minister for Home and Cooperation Amit Shah Saturday said excessive use of chemical fertilizers will lead to 50 per cent rise in the number of people suffering from cancer in the next 10-15 years. Shah also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has found an alternative to this crisis. The PM will be the "brand ambassador for showing the direction of natu-

ral agriculture to the whole world", he said.

"India's farming is heading towards a dangerous future. Due to excess use of chemical fertilizers, the soil is slowly becoming barren. Due to excess use of chemicals, the poison has started reaching underground water. If water also becomes poisonous in the next 10-15 years, then as per scientists, the number of people suffering from cancer will rise more than 50%," he said.



Mantra gives immunity against Covid: Minister

While the third wave of the coronavirus sweeps the state, Madhya Pradesh Culture and Tourism Minister Usha Thakur has said that she isn't bothered about the viral attack, as she has been reciting the agnihotra mantra for the last 30 years at sunrise and sunset, which has "streamlined her body's immune system". When queried recently by journalists in Khandwa district about not wearing face mask, the saffron-clad minister covered her face with a gumcha (scarf). She was in news during the second wave of the viral infection for claiming that reciting Sanskrit mantras, performing yoga and yagna, besides blowing conch bolstered her immunity against Covid.



Scindia camp MLA threatens to quit for farmers' cause

Jyotiraditya Scindia loyalist and BJP MLA in Madhya Pradesh Jai Lal Singh Jaji was recently seen in a video telling the hailstorm-ravaged farmers of his native Ashok Nagar district that he would quit the Vidhan Sabha and hit the street, if they weren't duly compensated for the loss of their crops. Jaji's video revived the early 2020 memories of present Union minister and then Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia threatening to hit the street against the Kamal Nath-led Congress government, backing the cause of guest teachers of government schools. A few weeks later, the 15-month-old Congress government collapsed after resignation by 22 MLAs who were Scindia loyalists - of which Jaji was a part of. He won back his seat in the following by-election on a BJP ticket.



Indore salon owners end ties with Jawed Habib

As many as eight salon owners Indore have ended their association with hairstylist Jawed Habib after a controversy erupted over the latter spitting on a woman's head and local BJP MLA Akash Vijayvargiya issued a warning. The eight salon owners were subsequently honoured by Akash Vijayvargiya, son of party's national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, on January 11. The young legislator also said that such a man (Habib) who has no respect for woman should have no place in the BJP as well as in the country. The MLA had earlier given the local administration and police 48 hours to shut down all salons associated with Habib.

'Snoring' behind leopard attack, says minister

State's forest minister Vijay Shah was recently in news, not for any novel policy announcement, but for remarks over a labourer being injured in leopard attack in Madhya Pradesh's hill tourism hotspot Pachmarhi. Claiming that the victim, who was sleeping along with other labourers, was targeted by the leopard as he was snoring, the minister even showed the journalists how the injured labourer might have been snoring. The opposition members were deft in passing dull commentary against the senior state cabinet minister. Some alleged that the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP government is replete with ministers who make the most bizarre comments.

Has diplomatic dialogue on Ukraine reached a dead end?

PARIS

THE failure of the United States and Russia this week to find a diplomatic solution to fizzling tensions over Eastern European security has increased the chance of a new Russian attack on Ukraine even if full-scale war is far from inevitable, analysts say.

Russia stands accused of having massed some 1,00,000 troops close to the Ukrainian border, as it seeks a commitment from the West that the pro-EU former Soviet state will never join NATO.

Senior Russian and US officials this week held talks in Geneva but there was no hint of any breakthrough, with Washington warning by the end of the week Moscow could stage a false flag operation within weeks to precipitate an invasion. "We have information that indicates Russia has already prepositioned a group of operatives to conduct a false-flag operation in eastern Ukraine," said Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary. "The operatives are trained in urban warfare and in using explosives to carry out acts of sabotage against Russia's own proxy forces."

Ukraine was meanwhile hit by a blistering cyberattack in the early hours of Friday blamed by the West on Russia and which some analysts feared could be the prelude to an attack.

Moscow responded to the ousting of Ukraine's former pro-Russia president in 2014 by seizing in a lightning military operation the Ukrainian Black Sea peninsula of Crimea, an annexation never recognised by the international community. It then backed separatists who

**Biden boxed in**

The Joe Biden administration in the US is pushing to get Congress, Europe and Ukraine on the same page as it tries to deter Russia from invading Ukraine, as officials from all sides warn that the risk of a conventional war is greater than at any time since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**What is Russia's plan?**

Analysts say despite the ominous signals it is impossible to read the mind of Russian President Vladimir Putin. For Marie Dumoulin, ECFR director, "the decision on whether or not to continue these talks will be taken by Vladimir Putin and no-one knows what it will be".

took control of two eastern Ukrainian regions in an unsolved conflict that has left over 13,000 dead.

NATO has made clear that it will never rule out the possibility that Ukraine could join the alliance, even if analysts see this as a very remote chance for now.

"Regrettably war is more likely we've reached a real impasse," said Melinda Haring, deputy director of the US-based Atlantic Council's Eurasia Centre. "As things stand, the Russian and US positions are irreconcilable."

But analysts say despite the ominous signals it is impossible to read the mind of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Russia has repeatedly been warned by Western powers of "massive" consequences were it to attack Ukraine again, although these would likely take the form of sanctions rather than any military riposte.



The Rwabee vessel seized by Yemen's Houthi rebels | FILE PIC

Yemen rebels reject UN call to free UAE-flagged ship

SANAA

YEMEN'S Houthi rebels on Saturday rejected a UN request to release an Emirati-flagged vessel they seized earlier this month, saying it carried weapons.

"The Rwabee vessel was not carrying... toys for children but weapons for extremists," Houthi official Hussein al-Azzi said.

The Iran-backed Huthis seized the ship on January 3 off the Red Sea port of Hodeida, along with its 11-member crew, and then released a video which they said shows military equipment on board. The United Arab Emirates has described the Rwabee as a "civilian cargo vessel".

It said the ship was leased by a Saudi company and that it had been in international waters carrying equipment to be used at a field hospital.

A Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen to support the internationally recognised government in March 2015

after the Huthis captured the capital, Sanaa, the previous year. On Friday the UN Security Council demanded the "immediate release" of the Rwabee and its crew.

It stressed "the importance of freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea", a strategic route for international shipping.

It also called on "all parties to de-escalate the situation in Yemen," including by working with the UN's special envoy to return to the negotiating table. But Azzi, quoted by the Huthis' Al-Masirah television, accused the UN of siding with "murderers who violate international laws".

The Rwabee "belongs to a country participating in the aggression against our people and at war with Yemen, and entered (Yemeni) territorial waters unlawfully", he said.

The UAE is part of the Saudi-led coalition which has described the seizing of the Rwabee as an act of "piracy". AFP

China fortifies strategic ties with Iran

BEIJING

CHINA said on Saturday it would begin implementing a strategic agreement with Iran, strengthening economic and political cooperation between the two countries as Beijing blasted Washington's sanctions on Tehran.

China and Iran signed the agreement last year after years of talks, with the wide-ranging partnership set to span areas including energy, security, infrastructure and communications.

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi and Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian announced the start of the partnership's implementation at a meeting in east China's Wuxi on Friday, Beijing's foreign ministry said in a statement. Few details of the secretive deal have been published, but the New York Times reported in 2020 that it would secure a regular supply of oil for China, citing a draft of the agreement leaked to the paper.

China is Iran's leading trade partner and was one of the biggest buyers of the country's oil before then-US president Donald Trump reimposed sweeping unilateral sanctions in 2018.

China has officially stopped importing oil from Iran, but analysts say Iranian crude is continuing to enter the country disguised as imports from other countries. AFP

US fugitive faked death, found in UK with Covid infection, say officials

WASHINGTON

A RHODE ISLAND man who is believed to have fled the US and faked his own death to evade prosecution for rape and financial fraud has been arrested in Scotland after being hospitalised with Covid, authorities said.

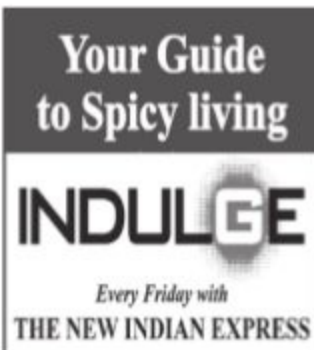
Nicholas Alahverdian, 34, who has been a vocal critic of Rhode Island child welfare after saying he was sexually abused in the state's foster care system, now faces extradition to the US to face a rape charge in Utah.

Alahverdian was discovered after developing a serious case of the coronavirus and being placed on a ventilator at a hospital in Glasgow, Rhode Island State Police Maj. Robert Creamer told

The Providence Journal this week.

Hospital staff verified his identity by comparing their patient to a photo of Alahverdian submitted by investigators, Utah County Attorney David Leavitt's office said, declining to provide details.

Alahverdian, who had been living overseas under the assumed name of Arthur Knight and has gone by other aliases, was arrested Dec. 13 by Scottish authorities. Leavitt said on Friday that his office has been providing information to authorities overseas regarding Alahverdian's flight risk as the court weighs his bail. Court documents unsealed in Utah on Thursday show Alahverdian met a 21-year-old woman on MySpace in 2008, when he was living in Orem, Utah, and going by the name Nicholas Rossi. AP



MALABAR CANCER CENTRE
NABH Accredited (an autonomous centre under Government of Kerala)
Thalassery, Kannur Dist., Kerala - 670 103, Phone :+91 490 2399244/257, 2355881
Fax: 91 490 2355880, Email: mcccty@gmail.com, Web: www.mcc.kerala.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE
MCC/382/2020-P4-GAD
Competitive e-Tenders/Re-e-Tenders (One/Two cover systems) are invited from established manufacturers/authorized suppliers through www.tenders.kerala.gov.in for the supply of the following items in Malabar Cancer Centre, Thalassery.

Sl. No.	Item Details	Tender ID
1	OT TABLE (02 Nos) ON BUYBACK BASIS (01 No)	2022_MCC_46543_1
2	HOOD TYPE - COMMERCIAL DISH WASHER	2021_MCC_415993_4
3	AUTOMATED IHC STAINER ON REAGENT RATE CONTRACT BASIS	2022_MCC_466511_1
4	MICROSLIDE FILING CABINET (02 Nos)	2022_MCC_466635_1
5	BLOCK FILING CABINET (02 Nos)	2022_MCC_466777_1
6	QA TOOL FOR LIGHT FIELD ALIGNMENT CHECKS AND RADIATION FIELD COORDINATE CHECK	2021_MCC_452234_3

For details contact our Purchase Division (Ph: 9496 2399 244/257) Sd/- Director

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Tel: 080 - 25943803, Fax: 080 - 25943800 E mail: maintnappc2.ban@sbi.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE
Under Rule 8(1) of the security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (For Immovable Property)
WHEREAS, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **State Bank of India**, under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and, in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued Demand Notices calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice with further interest/cost etc within 60 days from the date of the receipt of the said notice. Details of demand notices such as date of issue and loan outstanding amount are mentioned against each borrower hereunder.

1. Name and address of the Borrower : Ms. Sudina K D/o Mr. K Govindan & Mr. Soorjith K S/o Mr. K Govindan, No. 102, 1st Floor, Vishal, 12th Main, 6th Cross, HSR Layout, Bangalore-560034. **Also at** : # 7, Tharangini, Gear Road, Doddakannalli, Off Sarjapur Rd, Bangalore-560035.
Demand Notice date : 21.08.2021 **A/c No. HTL 67205070069/67130380916/70754/84**
Loan Outstanding amount as per demand notice : Rs. 27,42,825/- (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakhs Forty Two Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Five only) as on 20.08.2021, with future interest & expenses thereon
Possession Taken date : 13.01.2022
Loan Outstanding amount : Rs. 27,27,459/- (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakhs Twenty Seven Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Nine only) as on 10.12.2021 and with further interest and expenses thereon.
Description of the immovable property: All that piece and parcel of the Residential Property bearing Site No. 7, Old Katha No. 140/5, Katha No. 544, that assessment no. 544 (as per form-B property register SI.No.233 issued by BBMP), situated at Doddakannelli Village, Varthur Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, presently comes under BBMP Limits, measuring East to West-49 Feet and North to South-30 Feet in all measuring 1470 Sq. ft., together with all rights, appurtenances, whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded on: East by : Road, West by : Site No. 24, North by : Site No. 8, South by : Site No. 6.

2. Name of the Borrowers : Mr. Ravi S S/o Mr. K Sathyanarayana, # 40, Sahyadri, 5th Cross, 33rd Main, BTM 1st Stage, Dollar Scheme, Madivala, Bangalore-560 068. **Also at** : No. 67, 4th A Cross, 35th main, BTM 1st Stage, Madivala, Dollars Scheme, Bangalore-560 068. **Ms. Vidhya. VS W/o Mr. S Ravi, (Guarantor)**, At: # 40, Sahyadri, 5th Cross, 33rd Main, BTM 1st Stage, Dollar Scheme, Madiwala, Bangalore-560 068
Demand Notice date : 19.08.2021 **A/c No. HTL33336553420/12705/HL/493**
Loan Outstanding amount as per demand notice : Rs. 12,51,769/- (Rupees Twelve Lakhs Fifty One Thousand Seven Hundred and Sixty Nine Only) as on 17.08.2021, with future interest & expenses thereon
Possession Taken date : 13.01.2022
Loan Outstanding amount : Rs. 11,98,833/- (Rupees Eleven Lakhs Ninety Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty Three only) as on 12.12.2021 and with further interest and expenses thereon.
Description of the immovable property: All that part and parcel of the property bearing BDA and Municipal No. 40, PID No. 65-49-40 in Sy No. 34 of Madivala Village, at BTM Layout, Ward No. 65, Bangalore, measuring East to West 12.19 mts and North to South -9.14 mts totally measuring 111.41 sq mts, bounded on the: East by : Site No. 49, West by : Road, North by : Site No. 41, South by : Site No. 39.

3. Name of the Borrowers : 1) Mrs. Kelli Devi W/o Late Mr. Bhundaram, 2) Mrs. Kelli Devi W/o Late Mr. Bhundaram (on behalf of minor daughter **Ms. Bhagyalakshmi**), 3) **Mr. Dinesh S/o Late Mr. Bhundaram**, 4) **Ms. Mamatha D/o Late Mr. Bhundaram** All at: Basavanahalli - Ward No. 7/3, Anekal Town, Bangalore Rural District, Anekal - 562 106. **Also at**: No 56, Hospete Gandhi Circle, Anekal Town, Bangalore Rural District, Anekal - 562 106. **And also at**: MA No.782/4132/24, Ward No.7/3, Salamma-Ramakka Layout, Anekal-562 106, Bangalore.
Demand Notice date : 14.06.2021 **HTL 64100562914 & 64106925410/40027/HL/99**
Loan Outstanding amount as per demand notice : Rs. 5,05,048/- (Rupees Five Lakh Five Thousand and Forty Eight Only) as on 13.06.2021 with future interest & expenses thereon
Possession Taken date : 13.01.2022
Loan Outstanding amount : Rs. 4,79,339/- (Rs. Four Lakh Seventy Nine Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty Nine only) as on 10.12.2021 and with further interest and expenses thereon.
Description of the immovable property: All that piece and parcel of residential property bearing Municipal Assessment old No.782/4132/24 measuring 9.15ft X (12.2ft+10.7ft)/2=1125sqft situated at ward No.7/3, at Salamma-Ramakka Layout, Anekal Town, Bangalore District and bounded on: East by : Site No. 23, West by : Road, North by : Site No.17, South by : Road.

4. Name of the Borrowers : Mr. Shivashankar J S/o. N Joghee, # 315/4, Adarsha Jeevana Nilaya, 6th Cross, 6th Main, Venkatapura, Koramangala 1st Stage, Bangalore-560 034. **Also at** : Flat No. 201, 2nd Floor, "SASHANK PRIMERO", Haralakunte Village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore-560 068.
Demand Notice date : 21.08.2021 **A/c No. HTL64136924217/64136924319/64160512608/51162/HL/110**
Loan Outstanding amount as per demand notice : Rs. 17,43,022/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakhs Forty Three Thousand and Twenty Two only) as on 20.08.2021 with future interest & expenses thereon
Possession Taken date : 13.01.2022
Loan Outstanding amount : Rs. 17,30,705/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakhs Thirty Thousand Seven Hundred and Five Only) as on 10.12.2021 and with further interest and expenses thereon.
Description of the immovable property: Schedule 'a' Property : All that piece and parcel of the immovable property bearing Site No.64, 65, 70 & 71, Khata No.28, Assessment Register No.48/2, now coming under the jurisdiction of BBMP (Bommanahalli - Ward No.174), property No.143/143/143/48/2/64,65,70,71, situated at Haralakunte village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, measuring East to West: 80 feet, North to South : on the Eastern Side : 68 ft. on the western side: 78 feet, and bounded on the: East by : Road, West by : Road, North by : Private Property, South by : Road.
Schedule 'b' Property: 206 Sq. feet of undivided right, title and interest in the immovable property mentioned in Schedule 'a' above.
Schedule 'c' Property: Flat bearing No.201, on the Second Floor, measuring about 1035 Sq. Ft. super built up area, comprising of Two bed rooms with RCC Roofing, Vitrified Flooring together with One reserved covered car parking space, including proportionate share in the common areas such as passages, lobbies, staircase, etc. in the multi storied residential building known as "SHASHANK PRIMERO" constructed over the land described under Schedule 'a' above.

5. Name of the Borrowers : 1) Mrs. Saralavathi S W/o Mr. Satyanarayana & 2. Mr. Muralidhar Y S/o Mr. Satyanarayana, # 21/98, Brahmin Street, ANEKAL-562 106. **Also at**: No. 25, Property No. 213/25, Chikkahagade Village, Kasaba Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore dist-560 106, and 3) **Mrs. Poornima W/o Mr. Gopalakrishna**, V. No. 18, Poppuramma Street, Anekal (Guarantor)
Demand Notice date : 07.08.2021 **A/c No. HTL64207139737/40027/HL/220**
Loan Outstanding amount as per demand notice : Rs. 15,86,184/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Eighty Six Thousand One Hundred Eighty Four only) as on 05.08.2021 and with further interest and expenses thereon.
Possession Taken date : 13.01.2022
Loan Outstanding amount : Rs. 15,05,671/- (Rs. Fifteen Lakh Five Thousand Six Hundred and Seventy One only) as on 10.12.2021 and with further interest and expenses thereon.
Description of the immovable property: All that Piece and Parcel of property bearing site No.25, old Khata No.25, New property No. 1502001/10301020013, as per VP record Property No. 213/25 measuring East to West 40 ft and North to South 30ft, totally measuring 1200 sq ft situated at Chikkahagade Village, Kasaba Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore Dist, carved out of Sy No.30/28 30/3 lands converted for residential purpose, vide order (1) No. ALN, SR.(A) 90/2005-06 dt 17.10.2005 (2) ALN, SR.(A) 89/2005-06 dt 17.10.2005 and (3) ALN, (A) (K&A) SR98/2005-06 dt 17.01.2005 issued by the Asst Commissioner, Bangalore Sub-Division, Bangalore and the Layout plan approved by BMRDA vide order No.BMRDA/LAO/248/2005-06 dated 27.03.2006 and bounded on the :- East : Site No.22, West : Road, North : Site No.24, South : Site No.26.

The above mentioned borrowers/guarantor/ mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers/guarantor/ mortgagors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein above in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on above mentioned date.

The borrowers/guarantor/ mortgagors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the **State Bank of India, RACPC II, Koramangala, Bangalore- 560 034** for amount mentioned against their names with further interest accrued and cost/ expenses thereon.

The borrower's/guarantor's/mortgagor's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Date : 13.01.2022
Place: Bangalore

Sd/- Authorised Officer
State Bank of India, RACPC II, Koramangala

Beijing	2	-9	SNY	Los Angeles	23	13	LC
Colombo	32	23	TDS	Melbourne	30	20	LC
Dhaka	25	14	SNY	Moscow	-4	-7	LC
Dubai	26	20	LR	New York	2	1	LC
Houston	19	2	SNY	Singapore	32	25	TDS
Istanbul	7	1	LC	Toronto	-3	-4	SNY
London	9	1	LC	Washington	2	1	SW

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APPENDIX-IV
Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Rule-8(1)
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For Immovable Property)
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Ashoknagar Co-op Bank Ltd.**, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the power conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 issued a **DEMAND NOTICE** calling upon the borrowers to repay the amount mentioned below in the notice being the dues until payment in full within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section (4) of Section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and mentioned the dates below.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

I) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1. Mr. Jayarama V, S/o Late Venkateswara, No. 12, 2nd Main road, 4th cross, Nanjamma Agrahara, Chamarajpet, Bengaluru - 560018
2. Mr. Muddharaju J. S/o Mr. Jayarama V, No. 12, 2nd Main road, 4th cross, Nanjamma Agrahara, Chamarajpet, Bengaluru - 560018
3. Mr. Girish J. S/o Mr. Jayarama V, No. 12, 2nd Main road, 4th cross, Nanjamma Agrahara, Chamarajpet, Bengaluru - 560018
Demand Notice Dated: 06-11-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs.11,00,409.84/- (Rupees Eleven lakhs four hundred and nine & eighty four paise Only) (Interest upto - 06.11.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: All that piece and parcel of the Immovable Property bearing No.15, Survey No.15 Nanjamma Agrahara, Chamarajpet Main Road, BBMP Ward No.46-K B Shankar Layout, situated at 2nd cross Road, Bangalore. Measuring East to West 16'0" feet and North to South 26'6"feet, in all measuring 425.6 sq. ft. and in area together with building thereon with all civic amenities, with all rights appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded by the following boundaries: East by: Property No.14 & common passage, West by: Property No.16, North by: Northern portion of the property, South by: Road.

II) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1. Mr. Muniswamy N, No.22, "Balaji Nilaya" 3rd Main, 9th A Cross, Byraveshwaramangar, Nagarabavi, Bangalore-560072. 2. Mrs. Chandu S. No.22, "Balaji Nilaya" 3rd Main, 9th A Cross, Byraveshwaramangar, Nagarabavi, Bangalore-560072
Demand Notice Dated: 12-07-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs. 1,14,54,014/- (One Crore Fourteen Lakhs Fifty Four Thousand Fourteen Only) (Interest upto 12.07.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: All that piece and parcel of the Immovable Residential property bearing No.22, (Old No.19), Khattha No.67, present in the limit of BBMP PID No. 38-76-22, formed in S.Y. No.67 of Nagarabavi Village, situated at Ward No.38, 9th A Cross Road, 3rd Main Road, Byraveshwaramangar, Nagarabavi Village, Byraveshwara Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, Measuring East to West 40 feet, North to South 30'0"feet, in all measuring 1200 sq. ft. and in area together with building with all civic amenities, with all rights, appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded by the following boundaries: Bounded By: East: 9th A Cross Road, West: Property No.55, North: Property No.20, South: Property No.18.

III) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1. Mr. Pavan Kumar Goyal S/o Jayaprakash Goyal, No.3428 13th Cross K R Road, near M M Brigade Shastri nagar, Bengaluru-560028
2. "Build solution Prop" -Mr. Pavan Kumar Goyal, S/o Jayaprakash Goyal, No.3428 13th Cross K R Road, near M M Brigade Shastri nagar, Bengaluru-560028
3. Mrs. Madhu Goyal, W/o Mr. Pavan Kumar Goyal, No.3428 13th Cross K R Road, near M M Brigade Shastri nagar, Bengaluru-560028
Demand Notice Dated: 04-11-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs.52,83,640.56/- (Rupees Fifty two lakhs eighty three thousand six hundred and forty & fifty six paise Only) (Interest Up to -04.11.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: All that piece and parcel of the Immovable Property bearing House List No.3428, BBMP Khattha No.212, PID No.59-37-212, Limits comes under BBMP Ward No.59-Yediyur, situated at 6th cross road, Shastri Nagar, Banashankari 2nd stage, Bangalore. Measuring East to West 20'0" feet and North to South 30'0"feet, in all measuring 600 sq. ft. and in area together with building thereon with all civic amenities, with all rights appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded by the following boundaries: East by : Site No-3427, West by : Site No-3429, North by : Site No-3417, South by : Road.

IV) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1 Mrs. PREMA .M, No 79 DIESEL SHED ROAD, DEVASANDRA JUSTICE, BHEEMIAH LYT K R PURAM, BANGALORE- 560036. 2. Mr. MANJUNATH G, NO 79 DIESEL SHED ROAD, JUSTICE BHIMIAH LAYOUT, KRISHNAPURA, BANGALORE- 560036
Demand Notice Dated: 09-09-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs.78,65,418/- (Seventy Eight Lakhs Sixty Five Thousand Four Hundred And Eighteen Only) (Interest upto - 09.09.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: 1. All that piece and parcel of the Immovable House property bearing Site No.28, Khattha No.28/44/2, Property No. 44/2, Situated At Justice Bheemiah Layout, 1st Cross, Devasandra Village, K.R.Puram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore. Measuring East to West 40 feet, North to South 30 feet in all measuring 1200 sq. ft. and in area with all civic amenities, with all rights, together With All Rights, appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded by the following boundaries. Bounded By: East: Site No.21, West: Road, North: Site No.29, South: Site No.27
2. All that piece and parcel of the Immovable House property bearing Municipal No.66, Khattha And Property No. 66/2, situated at Ward No.3, Gowri Balija Sangha, Devasandra Village, K.R.Puram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore-560036. Now Comes Under BBMP K.R.Puram Sub-Division Khattha No. 258/66/2/66, Measuring East to West 20 feet, And North to South 30 feet in all measures 600 sq. ft. and in area with all civic amenities, together With All Rights, appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded by the following boundaries. Bounded By: East: Private Property of Muslim, West: K.R. Puram Boundary, North: Private Property, South: Road.

V) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1. M/s. Sudha Electricals & Enterprises, Represented by its Proprietors Mr. Prakash R S/o Late Ramachandra Rao No.21, 4th Cross, Kuvempu Road, Chikkalandsara, Bangalore-560061. 2. Mrs. Roja Panchangam, W/o Prakash, No.21, 4th Cross, Kuvempu Road, Chikkalandsara, Bangalore-560061
Demand Notice Dated: 04-11-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs.1,89,35,560/- (Rupees One Crore Eighty Nine Lakhs Thirty Five Thousand Five Hundred and Sixty Only) (Interest Up to -04.11.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: Item 1: All that piece and parcel of the immovable house property bearing No.21, Khattha No.38/4, Khatthumuri No.317, Raja rajeshwari nagara city municipal council khattha no.688/21/34, BBMP Khattha No.717/21 Situated at ward no.197, 4th Cross, Kuvempu road, Chikkalandsara Bengaluru-61. Measuring East to West 60 Feet 0" Inches, North to South 29 Feet 0" Inches in all 1740 Sq.ft. Bounded By: East : Road, West: Private property, North : Property belongs to Sr. Satyanarayana, S/o : Site No.22 & 23.
Item No.2: All that piece and parcel of the immovable house property bearing No.1225, situated at 10th Block, BDA Layout, Anjanapura Village, Bangalore, measuring East to West 12 meters, North to South 9 meters, in all 108 sq. meters. Bounded By: East: Site No.1221 G & H, West: Road, North: Site No.1226, South: Site No.1224.

VI) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1. Mr. Vijay Kumar K, No. 38/2 Flat No 105 17th Cross 35th Main 6th Phase, J.P nagar, Bangalore- 560078. 2. Mr. Krishna Murthy M, No 37 7th Main Near, BDA Park Avalahalli, BSK III Stage, Bangalore- 560085.
Demand Notice Dated: 04-11-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs.2,14,83,584/- (Two Crore Fourteen Lakhs Eighty Three Thousand Five Hundred And Eighty Four Only) (Interest Up to -04.11.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: Item 1: No.13/4, PID No. 48-92-13/4, 6th Cross, New Kalasipalyam Layout, Bangalore, Measuring East to West (35'6" + 35'3")/2 Feet And North to South 22'3"feet, totally 886 Sq.ft. And Bounded On: East by: M Ashwathnarayan Property, West by: Common Passage, North by: M Ashwathnarayan Property, South by: Arumugam Mudaliar Road.
Item No.2. Immovable Property Bearing No. 13/7, 'E' PART, PID No.48-92-13/7, 6th cross, New Kalasipalyam Layout, Bangalore, Measuring East to West 30'0" feet And North to South 45'0" feet, totally 1350 Sq.ft., in area with all civic amenities together with all rights, appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded on the: East by: Common Passage, West by: Corporation Property, North by: M Krishna Murthy & H Radha Property, South by: M Dhanraj Property.

VII) Name and Address of the Borrower: 1. Mrs. Shobha W/o Late Raju M, 2. Dhanalakshmi, age 35 years, 3. Pushpa, age 28 years, 4. Kusuma, age about 25 years, 5. Tejaswini, age 24 years, SI. No. 2 to 5 are the daughters of Late Raju M. No. 511, 5th Cross, Bhakshi Garden Beli Muti Road, Bangalore-53. 2. Mr. Sathyanarayana, No. 34/8, Shivanna Palya, Near Radha Krishna School, Valagerally Palya, Near Shirke, K S Town, Bangalore-560 060.
Demand Notice Dated: 30-08-2021 **Possession Notice date: 10-01-2022**
Loan outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice is Rs. 32,39,688/- (Thirty Two Lakhs Thirty Nine Thousand Six Hundred And Eighty Eight Only) (Interest Up to - 30.08.2021)
Description of Immovable Property: All that piece and parcel of the Immovable Residential property bearing No. 7, present Katha No. 38/2, 3/7, (Old Katha No. 38/2, 38/3) Vaddarapalya Village, Valagerahalli Dakshale, Kengeri Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bangalore within the limits of BBMP, measuring East to West 32'2" feet and North to South 30'0" feet. Total measuring 975 sqft with all civic amenities, with all rights, appurtenances, whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded by the following boundaries, bounded on East by: BDA Property, West by: 10 feet Road, North by: Property of Ashwathamma, South by: remaining Southern portion of same Site.

Place : Bangalore
Date: 10-01-2022

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Ashoknagar Co-op Bank Ltd.

Despite govt aid, Vi woes not over

Govt having stake in lieu of AGR & spectrum dues may give short-term relief, say experts

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

LAST week telecom operator Vodafone Idea Limited (VIL) decided to convert the interest on spectrum and adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues into government equity. This means the government will become the highest stakeholder in the country's third largest telecom company with 35.8% shares. As the news circulated in the market, the shares of Vodafone Idea went down drastically as many believed the government will take over the company. On the bourses, the shares of Vodafone Idea plunged 21%, but it bounced back 8.5% the next day when the chief executive officer of Vodafone Idea Ravinder Takkar rebuffed all these speculations.

"The government, through a letter from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), has clarified that it does not want its nominee on the board. They have said there is no intention to nominate a person on to the board, we don't expect it either," informed Takkar.

Overall, the decision of Vodafone Idea received a mixed response from the telecom and market experts. Many are of the view Vodafone Idea got a lifeline that would save it from bankruptcy or shutting down. A few believe it would help the cash-strapped telco to ease its cash flow so that it could use that money to improve its network and spend on 5G spectrum.

The presence of the government as a stakeholder will help the company to invite a few investors. However, others differ. They say it is a short-term relief for the telecom operator, and what if it is not able to pay the amount on time.

AGR dues and relief package

The telecommunication industry is said to be very capital intensive as it requires an extensive network infrastructure to provide fixed line and wireless services. The industry needs regular investment to upgrade its technology. For in-

TELCO'S TALE		
Vodafone Idea had past AGR dues worth ₹58,254 crore, of which, it has paid ₹7,854 crore	Presence of the government as a stakeholder is likely to help the company to get investors	Experts say the government may end up increasing its stake in VIL further as and when the cumulative deferred AGR dues of ~₹92,000 cr and spectrum liabilities become payable
With falling subscribers and inadequate investments in the network infrastructure, VIL is unlikely to be in a position to service the deferred liabilities in about four years	Analysts say it is a short-term relief as the telco will need capex to expand and upgrade to stay in the competition	

stance, this year, the 5G spectrum auction is round the corner and the telecom operators need a hefty sum of money to bid for it.

Then comes Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR), which is the usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). At the same time, the telecom operators in India are claiming that it has the lowest Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) in the world. All these things are making these telecom operators difficult to thrive and debts are piling year on year.

To give a lifeline to the ailing industry, the government in October 2021 came up with a telecom relief package.

The package includes a four-year moratorium to repay dues it owed to the government, one-time opportunity to exercise the option of paying interest for the four years of deferment of spectrum and AGR dues by converting the net present

Subsequently, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices decided to convert the interest from AGR dues to government equity. Vodafone Idea had past AGR dues worth ₹58,254 crore, of which it has already paid ₹7,854 crore. As per the company estimates, the net present

value (NPV) of this interest is ₹16,000 crore and the issue price would be ₹10 per share. Tata Teleservices owes ₹850 crore to the government as in AGR dues, thus enabling the government to own 9.5% stake in the company.

However, Bharti Airtel, which owes around ₹43,980 crore in AGR dues, of which ₹18,004 crore had been paid, decided not to opt for converting its interest dues into government equity.

Its impact?

Vodafone is the third largest telco in India with a subscriber base of 27 crore till August 2021. Now the moot question is what the latest move will cost to the company?

Prashanth Tapse, vice-president (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said it is just a structural rescue plan to keep Vodafone under survival mode helping the company to breathe in the competitive space and stave off the risk of bankruptcy, which was a concern for equity investors.

"I believe, in the current bleeding environment, it would be very hard to get new investors into IDEA as going forward they will need huge money for capex to expand and upgrade technology and if

money doesn't come in, peers would take undue advantage and lead to loss of opportunity to Vodafone Idea," said Prashanth Tapse.

The Motilal Oswal Financial Services said Vodafone Idea will have to increase their tariff to have higher ARPU to be in the game and avoid any major market loss. "Large-scale capital support is needed to meet the liabilities of ₹1,94,500 crore. It would also need to invest in the network to arrest the ongoing market share churn. The numbers are startling; therefore, VIL would need to take a tariff hike - leading to an ARPU increase of ~1.9x - to reach a self-sustainable level over the next four years," said the financial firm.

It also mentioned that it may need to grow its revenue approximately three times from current levels and containing the rate of churn should be a priority.

"Until VIL has sufficient funds to invest in the network and compete in the market, the subscriber churn may continue to dilute earnings," said the firm.

However, Kotak Institutional Equities believes the step by Vodafone Idea highlights the lack of confidence on capital raise or cash flow improvement. The firm said the government may end up increasing its stake in VIL further. "In our view, the government may end up increasing its stake in VIL further, as and when the cumulative deferred amount of ~₹92,000 crore pertaining to AGR dues and spectrum liabilities becomes payable post the end of the moratorium period.

"It is unlikely that VIL will be in any position to service the deferred liabilities in about four years as it continues to lose subscribers and falls short of desirable investments in the network infrastructure to keep up with competition, which is already well ahead in terms of service capabilities," said the firm.

GREEN ENERGY ON A ROLL AS RELIANCE JOINS THE BANDWAGON

GURBIR SINGH

SLOWLY but surely green energy is becoming part of our lives. In this writer's housing complex in Mumbai, a Tata Power vendor had, a few years ago, mounted solar panels on the roof of the multi-story buildings, and the power generated has been fed into the electric supply company's grid. Each of the 5 buildings generates around ₹30,000 worth of solar power a month, and in 4 years, the buildings have earned back their initial capital investment of ₹15 lakh each. Now on, solar energy is subsidising the residents' power bills.

So when Reliance Industries announced, a few days ago, that it had signed up with the Gujarat government to invest ₹5.95 lakh crore in the state to set up 100 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy plants and other green power initiatives, one realises how mainstream green energy has become.

Mukesh Ambani's renewable power outing is not breaking news. RIL has been repeatedly confirming its commitment to investing in renewable power projects since June of last year. More recently the company announced a series of partnerships and acquisitions worth over ₹12,000 crore with international renewable majors like REC, NexWafe, Sterling & Wilson and Ambri. The brokerage house Bernstein predicts the company will generate up to 10% of the company's pre-tax profits by FY26.

As the world is slowly walking away from fossil fuels, Mukesh Ambani told a Qatar economic meet last June that the company, dependent for 60% of its turnover on mining hydrocarbons, would rejig its businesses and be net carbon zero by 2035. The one abiding mystery is: why is the entire renewable power plan centered on Gujarat?

The big league

Beyond Reliance Green Energy, and RIL is a late comer, there are a slew of renewable energy companies that are making a mark. The sector has moved beyond government subsidies and programmes as private players realize that this is the disruptive sector to be in. Among the companies tipped for galloping growth is Tata Power. Traditionally in coal-fired power, Tata Power is leap-

frogging in renewable energy with a capacity of 2.6 GW in 11 states, with a target of renewable production of 15 GW by 2025. No wonder the stock is up 210% over the last one year.

Two other renewable energy upstream companies, watched carefully by investors in the stock market, are Websol Energy Systems and Borosil Renewables. Websol is a leading manufacturer of photovoltaic monocrystalline solar cells and exports its products to Europe, while Borosil Renewables is the first and only solar glass manufacturer in India. Both have been on a roll with the Websol stock gaining 175% and Borosil as much as 326% over calendar 2021.

In August last, Re-New Power became the first Indian renewable energy company to list on Nasdaq. But the real pattern for the future is when the legacy companies give up trying to smother the new, disruptive competitors and join the race. Like Chrysler, Ford and GM first tried to kill Tesla, before they decided electric vehicles (EV) was the future.

NTPC, the biggest electricity producer in India, under pressure to green its portfolio and reduce coal use, has launched NTPC-Renewable Energy (NREL), and tied up with IOC for generation and storage of renewable energy. It's also planning to produce green hydro-

gen on a commercial scale from the upcoming 4,750 MW energy park at the Rann of Kutch.

Good progress

At a holistic level, India has installed clean power capacity of little over 150GW, and the target this year is to reach 175GW. The break-up will be: 100GW from solar, 60GW from wind, 10GW from bio-power and 5GW from small hydropower. While Covid-hit 2020 was struggling with new investment of \$6.2 billion in renewable energy projects, minister for power and new and renewable energy, RK Singh, has predicted 2022 will see investment in clean energy cross \$15 billion.

At the World Global Climate meet - COP21, India had committed to achieve 40% of its installed power capacity from non-fossil energy sources by 2030. Significantly, this target was achieved in November 2021 itself when green capacity touched 157 GW against a total installed capacity of a little over 392 GW, or 40.1%.

India is still a long way off from optimum standards of sustainable energy, like that of the European Union (EU), which has been logging 72% renewables for the last few years. Renewable energy has its problems. It is unpredictable and dependent on the elements. Initial investment also is a huge deterrent. However, over time, this tapers off and it has been proven over long gestation periods, solar energy becomes 20-25% cheaper than coal.

If one looks for a graph, it will be rapid growth over the next few years, and then a plateau for some time. But the goal of sustainable energy is very much on the horizon.

₹18,000-CR PLI

RIL arm, M&M, Hyundai, others seeking sops for battery units

RIL subsidiary Reliance New Energy Solar, Hyundai Global Motors, Ola Electric, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro are among the 10 firms that have submitted bids under the ₹18,100 crore production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery storage, the government said on Saturday.

A total of 10 bids with capacity of 130 Gwh -- over twice the manufacturing capacity to be awarded -- were received.

Amara Raja Batteries, Exide Industries, Rajesh Exports, India Power Corporation and Lucas-TVS have also submitted bids.

"Industry has reposed its faith in India's stellar progress as a world class manufacturing destination which resonates strongly with Prime Minister's clarion call of Atma Nirbhar Bharat - a self-reliant India," an official statement said.

The government approved the PLI scheme 'National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage' for achieving manufacturing capacity of 50 Giga Watt Hour (GWh) for enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities with a budgetary outlay of ₹18,100 crore.

Under the scheme, the manufacturing facility would have to be set up within two years. The incentive will be disbursed thereafter over a period of five years on sale of batteries. "The scheme received an encouraging response from local as well as global investors as bids received is 2.6 times the manufacturing capacity to be awarded i.e. 50 Gwh," the heavy industries ministry stated.

The technical bids received for the scheme were opened on Saturday. **PTI**

EXPRESS READ

Funding in start-ups rises to \$36 bn: Govt

New Delhi: Investors are taking huge interest in the country's startup ecosystem and in the last one year, annual fundings into startups have increased from \$11 billion to \$36 billion, a top government official said on Saturday. Anurag Jain, Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), said the share of investments coming to startups in India from world over, which includes domestic investments also, has risen to 6% from 4% earlier.

Maruti hikes vehicle prices by up to 4.3%

New Delhi: The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Saturday said it has increased prices of its models by up to 4.3% with immediate effect to partially offset the impact of the rise in input costs. The company has enhanced prices across its models in the range of 0.1% to 4.3% owing to increase in various input costs. "The weighted average price increase in ex-showroom Prices (Delhi) across models is 1.7%," the auto major said.

Future arm owns 68.72% in ACKPL

New Delhi: Future group's stake in Amar Chitra Katha Pvt Ltd (ACKPL) has increased to 68.72% post conversion of debentures into equity. After the conversion, Future Consumer Ltd holds a majority stake in ACKPL, said the Future group firm. "Post allotment of the equity shares as aforesaid, the company holds 68.72% of the paid equity share capital of ACKPL and accordingly ACKPL has now become a subsidiary of the company," said Future Consumer Ltd.

HDFC Bank net profit up 18%; revenues up 12%

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE country's second largest private sector bank — HDFC Bank — posted a strong ₹10,342.2 crore net profit on a standalone basis in the quarter-ended December 31, 2021, registering a growth of 18.1%. During the quarter, the bank's net revenues (net interest income plus other income) increased by 12.1% to ₹26,627 crore from ₹23,760.8 crore in the same quarter previous year.

Net interest income (interest earned less interest expended) for the quarter grew by 13.0% to ₹18,443.5 crore from ₹16,317.6 crore for the quarter ended Dec 31, 2020.

Core net interest margin, which measures net interest income as a percentage of interest-bearing assets, was at 4.1% during the quarter compared to 4.2% a year ago. In the September quarter also, the bank reported 4.1% net interest margin.

The bank showed improvement in asset quality during the quarter as gross non-performing assets were at 1.26%

of gross advances as on December 31, 2021 as against 1.35% as on September 30, 2021 and 1.38% as on December 31, 2020. Net non-performing assets were at 0.37% of net advances as on December 31, 2021 compared to 0.40% at the end of December 2020.

Provisions and contingencies for the quarter were ₹2,994 crore as against total provisions of ₹3,414.1 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2020. Total provisions for the current quarter included contingent provisions of approximately ₹900 crore.

Total advances grew 16.5% to ₹1,260,863 crore. Retail loans grew by 13.3%, commercial and rural banking loans grew by 29.4% and corporate and other whole-sale loans grew by 7.5%. Overseas advances constituted 3.4% of total advances.

The bank in a statement said it could increase its loan portfolio through relationship management, digital offering and breadth of products. Total deposits as of Dec 31, 2021 were ₹1,445,918 cr; up 13.8% from year-ago quarter.



Uco Bank, Balasore Zone, celebrates Foundation Day

Uco Bank, Balasore Zone has celebrated 79th Foundation Day amid much pompous and glory. Blood donation camp, free health check-up for senior citizens, distribution of study materials, sweets & clothes at orphanages, customer meet and several other programmes were organised at various branches in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar.



Paradip Port Trust organizes workshop on Gati Shakti

Paradip Port Trust under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, organised a workshop with the theme "Gati Shakti - The revolutionary Multi-Modal Connectivity for Integrated & Seamless Supply Chain" at Bhubaneswar. Gracing the inaugural session as chief guest, Sanjeev Ranjan, Secretary, MoPSW, said that PPT has the potential to reach a world class port.

Business & Beyond

CLW holds 9th RK Vir Memorial Lecture

The 9th RK Vir Memorial Lecture was held in New Delhi on Jan 4. The event was organised by IREE along with IET -DLN, IEEE Delhi section, TEMS IEEE Delhi chapter, WIE AG Delhi, IEI Delhi state. VK Yadav, former chairman, Railway Board, was chief guest, N Venkatesan, former member-electrical, Railway Board, and Rajesh Tiwari, former member-Traction, were guest of honour. SK Kashyap, General Manager presented the key note lecture.



NALCO awards presented on 42nd Foundation Day

National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), the Navratna CPSE, celebrated its 42nd Foundation Day in a hybrid mode at Nalco corporate office, Bhubaneswar on Jan 7. Sridhar Patra, Chairman-cum Managing Director, and functional directors addressed the employees. The event also witnessed the presentation of the NALCO awards.



KS Anand becomes CPRO, South Eastern Railway

KS Anand has taken over the charge of Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of South Eastern Railway on Jan 7. Prior to this, Anand was Deputy Chief Commercial Manager (Freight Marketing) of South Eastern Railway. Anand, an Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) Officer, has worked in various capacities like Senior Divisional Safety Officer, Chakradharpur, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Adra, Principal, Zonal Railway Training Institute, Sini etc.



UCO Bank celebrates its 79th Foundation Day

UCO Bank celebrated its 79th Foundation Day on Jan 6. On this occasion, customer meets were organised at branch level. Ravi Shankar Narayan, Dy General Manager & Zonal Head, Bangalore Zone, attended the customer meet at BTM Layout Branch and Ramamurthy Nagar Branch. A free health check up camp was organized with the bank's channel partners Future Generali India Insurance and Manipal Hospital at the Bangalore branch.





Manchester City took another huge step towards retaining the Premier League title as one moment of inspiration from **Kevin De Bruyne** saw off Chelsea 1-0 to open up a 13-point lead at the top of the table. A game of few chances was brought to life by the Belgian 20 minutes from time as he curled home the only goal from outside the box to seal a 12th consecutive league win for the champs.

VIRAT CALLS TIME ON CAPTAIN'S INNINGS

A day after India lost the Test series against South Africa 1-2, Kohli steps down as skipper; Rohit & Rahul among contenders to take over

VENKATA KRISHNA B @ Chennai

VOID. Less than a year after what is arguably their highest point in their Test history, Indian cricket is finding itself in crossroads. The captain, who sowed the seeds to play fearless, aggressive brand of cricket, one who prioritised Test cricket over anything else, and one who guided the team to the most wins in whites, has had enough.

Virat Kohli, the former India captain, sounds totally out of place. Yet, it is the reality Kohli has chosen to step aside as captain of the Test team – four months after quitting T20I captaincy and 38 days after BCCI removed him as ODI captain – with immediate effect.

“There have been many ups and also some downs along the journey, but never has there been a lack of effort or lack of belief. I have always believed in giving my 120 percent in everything I do, and if I can't do that, I know it's not the right thing to do. I have absolute clarity in my heart and I cannot be dishonest to my team,” Kohli

tweeted. From the outside, it looks every bit a surprising decision, one which most didn't see coming. The timing of the decision caught the BCCI officials surprised, but to say they were not expecting it too would be a massive understatement. Ever since the England tour where a couple of senior players sent an SOS to BCCI top brass expressing reservation over Kohli's captaincy, the 33-year-old has been on borrowed time. The captaincy switch in ODIs only contributed.

With Kohli, it was always said you received what you gave. And if one goes by how the BCCI turned its back on Kohli with regards to ODI captaincy, he has done the same now. It is understood that soon after Kohli revealed his



HIGHLIGHTS AS TEST CAPTAIN

As Virat Kohli steps down as India's Test skipper after serving for **seven years**, a look at all the highs and misses of one of the most celebrated captain's tenure..

TAKING INDIA TO TOP

When Kohli took the armband in 2014, India were 7th in ICC rankings. He took the team to the top spot in October 2016, and India have retained the ICC Test mace for five years since. Kohli is also the most successful captain (40 wins in 60 matches) for India ever.

THE MANY FIRSTS

Kohli became the first Indian captain to win a Test series in Australia in the 2018-19 series. Under his captaincy, India posted wins in Sri Lanka & West Indies twice and came close to winning in England last year before the final Test was postponed.

BUILDING FAST BOWLING RICHES

The stand out feature of Kohli's stint as Test skipper is the growth of fast bowling riches in India. Since he started, Kohli expressed his desire to improve the pace attack and has played a vital role in creating a pool of fast bowlers India has today.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the overall win-loss percentage, the two series losses in South Africa, especially the recently concluded one, and the defeat in the 2021 World Test Championship final will go down as the biggest chances missed by Kohli, the skipper, who doesn't have an ICC title to show in white-ball cricket too.

QUESTIONABLE SELECTIONS

Over the last 7 years, there were moments where Virat Kohli's team selections raised eyebrows, especially in the first half of the tenure – Adelaide 2014, Capetown, Lord's and Perth in 2018, WTC final in Southampton 2021 to name a few.

intentions in the dressing room on Friday, attempts were made to keep him going till the Sri

Lanka series. But, the 33-year-old is understood to have been firm on his decision.

Those in the know reveal, off late Kohli has been operating with his hands tied, clear signs



It's been 7 years of hard work, toil and relentless perseverance everyday to take the team in the right direction. I've done the job with absolute honesty and left nothing out there. Every thing has to come to a halt at some stage and for me as Test Captain of India, it's now.

Virat Kohli

of him not enjoying the full backing of the BCCI, which all Indian captains have enjoyed. In these circumstances, it is understood that Kohli, too, felt the time was right for him to step aside as it would allow him to concentrate on his batting alone.

While the decision could provide him a much needed fillip to find a second wind in his batting, Kohli, the captain, will be hard to replace. Unlike in limited-overs – where the selectors had a ready-made candidate in Rohit Sharma to take over as captain – there is nobody in Tests. While Rohit appears the best bet, there are concerns over his fitness and

unless his workload is managed properly, it would be impossible for him to lead across all formats.

If the BCCI decides to split the captaincy, then there are talks of KL Rahul being considered for the Test captaincy role. But he is yet to establish himself fully in the Test team, and though it is still early days, his captaincy in Johannesburg wasn't inspiring. With Ajinkya Rahane removed as vice-captain and his very place in the squad in question, going back to him would be seen as a backward step.

In the limited-overs, the decision to appoint Rohit was seen as a short-term option. Similarly, they might seek one in Tests too until the current cycle of the World Test Championship finishes. India are lined up to play Sri Lanka, Australia and Bangladesh over the next 16 months. With that being the case, they can even look at someone like R Ashwin, who would be a regular in these parts and allow someone like Rahul or Rishabh Pant to grow into the role.

Sindhu shocked, Lakshya enters final

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Chennai

WITH many absentees and PV Sindhu's goliath reputation, the Indian was tipped to walk away with the title in the ongoing Yonex-Sunrise India Open. Supanida Katethong of Thailand, on Saturday, had other ideas. Going against the script that was expected, the Thai-land shuttler, who's World No 33, put up a complete performance to shock the No 1 seed in the women's singles semifinals and march into the finals.

With lightning quick movement on the court and sharp returns, Supanida forced the helpless Sindhu into submission in a contest that lasted 59 minutes. “It just wasn't just my day. She played well. I have to go back and work on my mistakes,” Sindhu, who lost 21-14, 13-21, 21-10, said.

It will be an all-Thai final now as Supanida's compatriot,



Lakshya Sen reacts during his match against Malaysia's Ng Tze Yong | BAI

Busanan Ongbamrunphan, had earlier beaten Aakarshi Kashyap 26-24, 21-9 in the other semifinal.

While Sindhu and Aakarshi's journey ended, Lakshya Sen, who has been on the ascendancy in recent times, kept up his good form by beating Malay-

sia's Ng Tze Yong 19-21, 21-16, 21-12 in the men's singles semifinals. This is the first time Lakshya has reached a final at this level (Super 500). The youngster will face world champion Loh Kean Yew in the summit match.

“It's a good feeling to play my

first Super 500 final at my home. Fans are not allowed this time but there were a few people in the stadium who were supporting me and it felt good,” Lakshya said.

Loh, meanwhile, did not need to enter the court on Saturday as his opponent, Brian Yang, withdrew after complaining of sore throat and headache. Yang, however, tested negative for Covid-19.

One more virus case

Earlier on the day, the BWF confirmed that one player, who was part of the draw, tested positive for Covid following a mandatory RT-PCR test that was conducted on Friday. The player and his doubles partner were forced to withdraw.

In the men's doubles, Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy cruised to the final after a 21-10, 21-18 win over France duo of William Villager and Fabien Delrue.

We played as a unit & won the series, says Elgar

ASHOK VENUGOPAL @Chennai

WHEN the Indian team landed in South Africa mid December, the visitors were looked upon as favourites to return home win a historic Test series win. Nobody gave a chance to the hosts to emerge triumphant against Virat Kohli's men, which had a lot of experience in its ranks. But as the adage goes “Cricket is a game of glorious uncertainties” Dean Elgar and his young warriors defeated India 2-1 to pocket the series winning the final Test at Cape Town in style.

“Pretty elated. Obviously it will sink (Test series win) in a day or two. Really proud. We were thrown under the sword quite a few times in this series and the guys responded brilliantly. Obviously, to bounce back after losing the first game, to believe that we could still win. Extremely happy,” said an elated Dean Elgar after his team's creditable Test series win.

For India, it was an opportunity lost to win their maiden Test series in South Africa. But for Elgar & Co this could be a new chapter as they beat the top side and perhaps this win could facilitate the process of a team that is in transition. South Africa, after losing the first Test at Centurion by 113 runs, bounced back to win the remaining two Tests.

“We've played as a unit and we've grown massively as a group in the last two Tests. If you want to compete in Test cricket and be No 1 someday, you have to beat the best in the world. I'm really happy that things went well for us. Could easily have gone wrong and I'd have had egg on my face. As I said earlier, really proud of this group. We're by no means a finished article (side). I can tell you that. I'm already thinking of the next series,” insisted Elgar.

Djokovic returns to detention, d-day today

World No 1, Novak Djokovic, was back in detention at a Melbourne facility on Saturday. A detailed look at the situation with one day remaining for the Australian Open...

Wait, this case isn't over?

After Immigration minister, Alex Hawke, cancelled his visa, this was going to be the only outcome. The Serb appealed that decision immediately. His lawyers secured a minor victory on Saturday as the appeal would be heard by three justices (a full Federal Court). This would mean little room for appeal by the government in case they lose the case.



Why did Hawke cancel the visa?

Even though Djokovic won his initial appeal, Hawke had ministerial power to remove a person from Australia. It's this privilege he used to re-cancel the 34-year-old's visa. The government essentially said the World No 1's anti-vaccine stance could promote anti-vaccine sentiment. His presence may also promote disregard for existing Covid-19 rules.

When's the new case going to be heard?

The case will be heard on Sunday morning (will be livestreamed on YouTube) by Chief Justice James Allsop, Justice Anthony Besanko and Justice David O'Callaghan.

Will this be over on Sunday?

That's the belief because... decision for three judges to hear the appeal instead of a single judge elevates the importance of the case from the judiciary's perspective and means any verdict would be less likely to be appealed.

What about his Australian Open spot?

For the time being, Djokovic retains his spot and he will continue to do so till there is a verdict. If he withdraws before the Order Of Play (this is typically released Sunday afternoon) is issued, his bracket will be taken by Andrey Rublev (the No. 5 seed). If he withdraws after the OOP is published, his bracket will be taken by one of the Lucky Losers.

Is it true that he will be banned from Australia for three years if he does get deported?

Conflicting reports are doing the rounds. While a few suggest that that's the case, others say that the government may not necessarily seek that, as in it's not a hard and fast rule (especially if there's a change of government, Australia has a general election in May). The only thing that's clear is if there's extenuating circumstances, the Serb will be allowed in.



HOW HAVE PEOPLE REACTED TO THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT...

Why didn't you return him back right away, or tell him it was impossible to get a visa? Why are you harassing him and why are you matreating not only him, but his family and an entire nation that is free and proud.

Serbian President, Aleksandar Vucic

The Australian Open is much more important than any player. Australian Open will be a great Australian Open with or without him.

Rafael Nadal

U-19 WC: Australia & SL start with victories

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Chennai

AUSTRALIA and Sri Lanka Colts began their World Cup campaign with victories on the first day against hosts West Indies and Scotland, respectively on Friday.

In the opening match, Australia bundled out the hosts for 169 at Guyana. Skipper Cooper Connolly, Nivethan Radhakrishnan and Tom Whitney took three wickets each for Australia as West Indies captain Akeem Auguste top-scored with a 67-ball 57. In reply, Australia lost a couple of early wickets, but Teague Wyllie held forte at one end and took them through in 44.5 overs. The 17-year-old opening batter made an unbeaten 86, helping Australia win by six wickets.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka were off to a rocky start against Scotland as they were reduced to 99 for six in 22.3 overs. Wicket-

keeper Sakuna Nidarshana Liyanage revived the innings with a run-a-ball 85, taking Sri Lanka to 218 in 45.2 overs. Scotland got off to a good start in the chase, but Dunith Wellalage, the left-arm spinner, took five wickets, ensuring that the island nation did not lose control of the game. Scotland, eventually, fell short by 40 runs.

On Saturday, India lost their openers early in their first match against South Africa, but skipper Yash Dhull's patient 82 along with some crucial contributions from Kaushal Tambe and Shaik Rasheed helped them get past the 200-run mark. With Matthew Vtakling three wickets, India were all out for 232 in 46.5 overs.

Brief Scores: WI 169 in 40.1 ovs (Auguste 57; Connolly 3/17) **lost to** Australia 170/4 in 44.5 ovs (Wyllie 86; Layne 1/19); Sri Lanka 218 in 45.2 ovs (Liyanage 85; Fischer-Keogh 3/56) **bt** Scotland 178 all out in 48.4 ovs (Janvis 55; Wellalage 5/27); India 232 in 46.5 ovs (Dhull 82; Boast 3/40) **vs** SA.

EXPRESS READ

Mithali & Co to quarantine in Mumbai

NEW DELHI: The World Cup-bound Indian women's cricket team will assemble in Mumbai on Sunday for a week of quarantine before its travel to New Zealand. The team is expected to depart for New Zealand on Jan 24 and they will have to undergo another quarantine upon arrival.

Honda's Quintanilla runner-up in Dakar Rally

JEDDAH: Monster Energy Honda Team rider Pablo Quintanilla won the final stage of the Dakar Rally to grab second overall place, while Hero MotoSports Team finished with its best-ever performance. Quintanilla earned the final stage victory, finishing 3 minutes 27 seconds short of clinching the outright Dakar 2022 title.

Aubameyang has 'cardiac lesions'

YAOUNDE (CAMEROON): Gabon and Arsenal forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has been diagnosed with heart lesions at the African Cup of Nations in Cameroon after contracting the coronavirus, the Gabon Football Federation said. The 'cardiac lesions' were found in a check by Confederation of African Football medical officials.

England lose openers, trail Oz by 269 runs

HOBART: England's top-order batting woes continued in the Ashes series after Australia's tailenders led them to 303 all out in its first innings in the fifth day-night Test on Saturday.

Brief scores: Australia (o/n 241/6) 303 & 37/3 (Smith 17 n.o.) **vs** England 188 (Woakes 36, Root 34; Cummins 4/45).

Badosa issues Oz Open warning with title

SYDNEY: Paula Badosa issued an ominous warning ahead of the Australian Open by beating French Open champion Barbra Krejickova in a three-set thriller to win the Sydney Classic on Saturday. The World No 9 from Spain prevailed 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4) in two hours and 22 minutes after hitting 32 winners and 12 aces.

VIRUS CLOUD

Rising Covid cases in ISL bubble, coaches question postponement criteria

ASHIM SUNAM @ Bengaluru

THE third wave of Covid-19 is making matters difficult for the Indian Super League with cases on the rise. The bio bubble in Goa has been breached with several teams' players and officials being infected with the virus. As a result, two matches in the ongoing edition have been postponed, the latest being Saturday's clash between Bengaluru FC and ATK Mohun Bagan. In fact, the latter's previous game against Odisha FC also met the

same fate seven days ago.

Both the teams have cases inside their camps. If the Mariners have not trained for the last six to seven days, the Blues have not hit the ground for a couple of days. The story is more or less the same for some other clubs too like Kerala Blasters, who have not trained after their last match on Wednesday. They are said to be in isolation. As of now, Kerala's clash against Mumbai City FC is expected to go ahead, but things can change quickly. The Islanders head

coach Des Buckingham is also "concerned" about the Covid-19 situation though they have no single case. However, his opposite number Ivan Vukomanovic opened up about the difficult situation at hand.

“Looking at the circumstances, not only in our club, but so far, I think nine clubs are in lockdown. It is obviously not easy. Nobody is talking about football games anymore as everyone is concerned. Many of the teams in our expeditions have families, wives, children, preg-

nant wife,” said Blasters coach Vukomanovic on Saturday. “... have a feeling like it is passing virus to each other. When the teams meet each other, it is just like a chain process. It brings us to the situation, if you as a team do not train for days and then go for the game, we will see a bad football game and nothing but injuries. It can affect players' careers too.”

With cases being reported in different teams, it is surprising

that the ISL has not temporarily halted the league despite maintaining 'health and safety' of all personnel in various bubbles remains our priority' in their statement after Saturday's game was postponed.

Whether the competition is going to be temporarily paused or not in the days to come, some of the players are not happy with how only a select few games are being postponed when several teams have cases. For instance,



FC Goa played their last game against NorthEast United on Friday even when some Gaurs players had to miss out due to the Covid situation. However, it is also important to mention that there is a rule, which states that the tie can go ahead if both teams have 15 fit players fit.

With only ATK Mohun Bagan matches being postponed so far, Goa captain Edu Bedia made his frustration public on Instagram. “Yesterday we played the game (against NorthEast) with nine casualties due to Covid cas-

es. Today for the second consecutive match, another team suspends its game for the same reason. Can someone explain that to me? Adulterated competition.

“Players are losing interest and the desire to continue. They continue to play to collect their contracts without any ambition. This is what has been achieved with this year's rules. Whether you like it or not, all the people inside the bio-bubble just want March to come and the league to end, whatever the outcome.”



Scientists warn that Omicron's whirlwind advance practically ensures it won't be the last version of the coronavirus to worry the world



A duck killed by a hunter in South Carolina had a contagious bird flu that has not been detected in the wild in the US in five years, officials said. The flu poses a low risk to people but can spread quickly through chicken

TONGANS FLEE TSUNAMI AFTER VOLCANIC ERUPTION

Undersea volcano breaks out near the Pacific nation of Tonga sending large waves crashing across the shore and forcing people to rush to higher ground

DISASTER

NUKU'ALOFA: Frightened Tongans fled to higher ground on Saturday after a massive volcanic eruption — heard in neighbouring countries — triggered tsunami warnings across the South Pacific.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or the extent of the damage as communications with the small nation remained problematic. Video posted to social media showed large waves washing ashore in coastal areas, swirling around homes and buildings.

New Zealand's military said it was monitoring the situation and remained on standby ready to assist if asked.

Satellite images showed a huge eruption, a plume of ash,

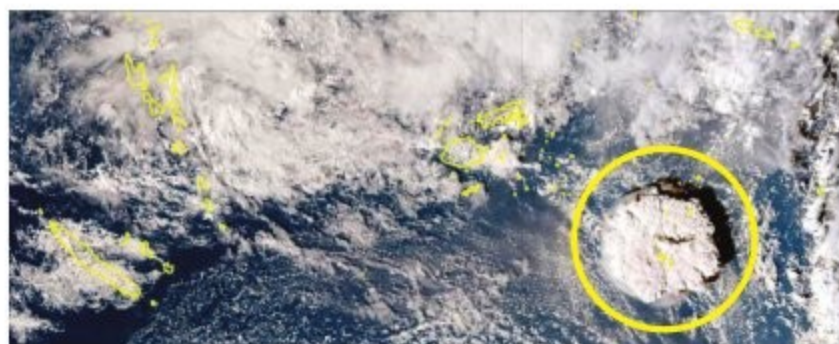
steam and gas rising like a mushroom above the blue Pacific waters.

The Tonga Meteorological Services said a tsunami warning was in effect for all of the archipelago, and data from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre showed waves of 80 cm (2.6 feet) had been detected.

Residents of American Samoa were alerted of the tsunami warning by local broadcasters as well as church bells that rang territory-wide. An outdoor siren warning system was out of service. Those living along the shoreline quickly moved to higher ground.

As night fell, there were no reports of any damage and the Hawaii-based tsunami centre cancelled the alert.

Authorities in the nearby is-



Satellite image shows an undersea volcano eruption at the Pacific nation of Tonga

land nations of Fiji and Samoa also issued warnings, telling people to avoid the shoreline due to strong currents and dangerous waves. The Japan Meteorological Agency said there may be a slight swelling of the water along the Japanese coasts, but it was not expected to cause any damage.

The Islands Business news

site reported that a convoy of police and military troops evacuated Tonga's King Tupou VI from his palace near the shore. He was among the many residents who headed for higher ground.

Mere Taufa said she was in her house getting ready for dinner when the volcano erupted. "It was massive, the ground

shook, our house was shaking. It came in waves. My younger brother thought bombs were exploding nearby," Taufa told the Stuff news website.

She said water filled their home minutes later and she saw the wall of a neighbouring house collapse.

"We just knew straight away it was a tsunami. Just water gushing into our home.

"You could just hear screams everywhere, people screaming for safety, for everyone to get to higher ground." The explosion of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai volcano was the latest in a series of spectacular eruptions.

Tonga's King Tupou VI was reported to have been evacuated from the Royal Palace in Nuku'alofa and taken by a po-

lice convoy to a villa well away from the coastline.

The initial eruption lasted at least eight minutes and sent plumes of gas, ash and smoke several kilometres into the air.

Residents in coastal areas were urged to head for higher ground. A Twitter user identified as Dr Faka'iloatonga Taumoe'olau posted video showing waves crashing ashore.

"Can literally hear the volcano eruption, sounds pretty violent," he wrote.

Earlier, the *Matangi Tonga* news site reported that scientists observed massive explosions, thunder and lightning near the volcano after it started erupting early Friday. Satellite images showed a 5-km (3 mile)-wide plume rising into the air to about 20 km (12 miles).

More than 2,300 km (1,400 miles) away in New Zealand, officials were warning of storm surges from the eruption.

The National Emergency Management Agency said some parts of New Zealand could expect "strong and unusual currents and unpredictable surges at the shore following a large volcanic eruption".

Tsunami warnings were issued Saturday for the entire US West Coast after a massive volcanic eruption across the Pacific Ocean in Tonga, with tsunami waves triggering low-level flooding in Hawaii. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said "a tsunami is currently being observed" in Hawaii, but said there was "no reported damage and only minor flooding throughout the islands."

EXFILE • HEALTH

Organ shortage: Animals may save us

This week, doctors transplanted a pig heart into a patient in the US. Experts hope animals' organs may one day help save human lives

EARLY EXPERIMENTS

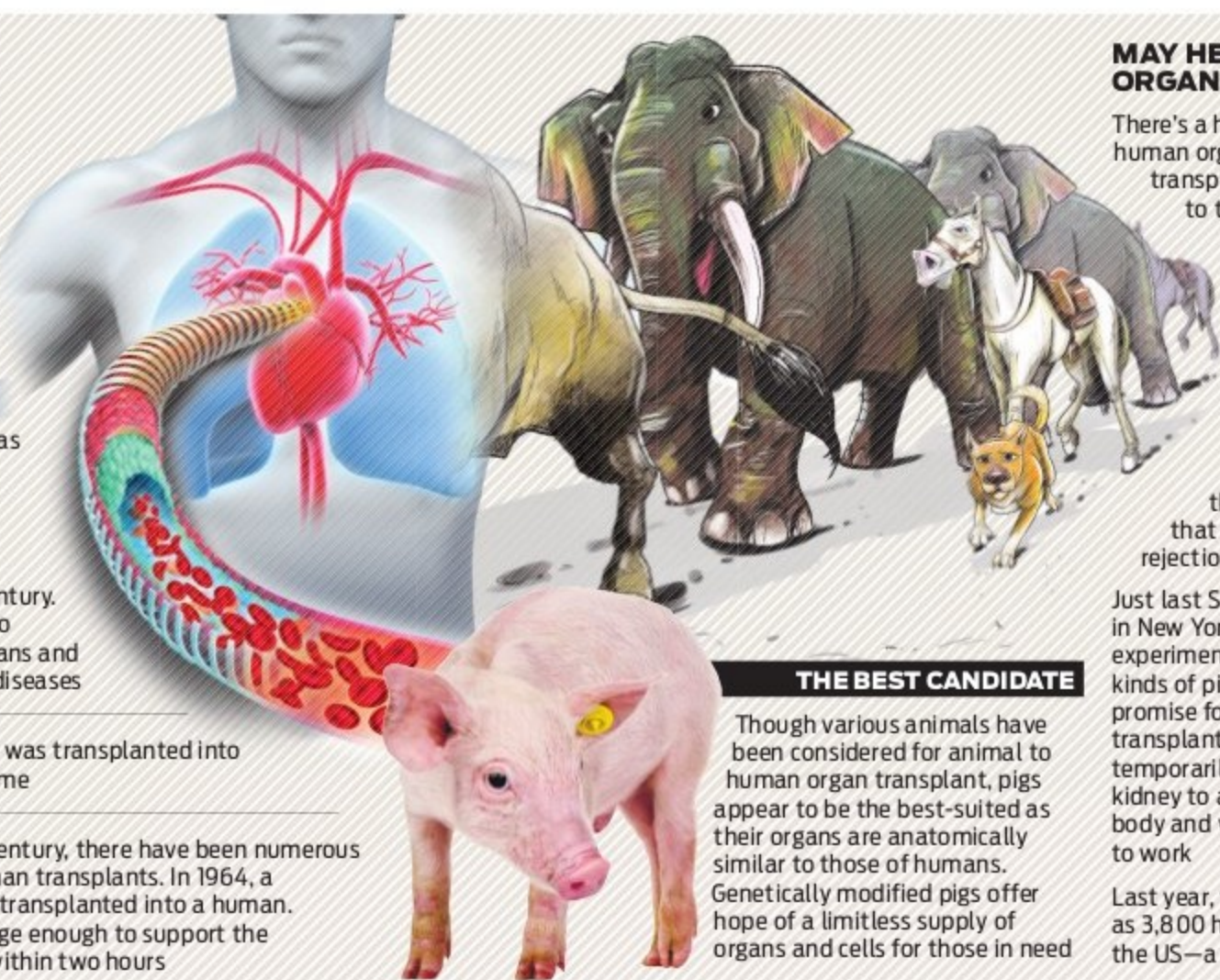
Between the 17th and 20th centuries, blood was transfused from animals into humans

World's first recorded animal to human blood transfusion was carried out by French physician Jean-Baptiste Denis. He transfused 12 ounces (350ml) of blood taken from a lamb into a feverish boy. At the time, it was believed that lamb's blood had healing properties

Skin grafts between various animal species and humans became common in the 19th century. Animal skin was used to cover skin ulcer in humans and a variety of other skin diseases

In 1838, cornea of a pig was transplanted into a human for the first time

Throughout the 20th century, there have been numerous cases of animal to human transplants. In 1964, a chimpanzee heart was transplanted into a human. However, it was not large enough to support the circulation and failed within two hours



MAY HELP EASE ORGAN SHORTAGE

There's a huge shortage of human organs donated for transplant, driving scientists to try to figure out how to use animal organs instead

The Maryland surgeons used a heart from a pig that had undergone gene-editing to remove a sugar in its cells that's responsible for that hyper-fast organ rejection

Just last September, researchers in New York performed an experiment suggesting these kinds of pigs might offer promise for animal-to-human transplants. Doctors temporarily attached a pig's kidney to a deceased human body and watched it begin to work

Last year, there were as many as 3,800 heart transplants in the US—a record number

THE BEST CANDIDATE

Though various animals have been considered for animal to human organ transplant, pigs appear to be the best-suited as their organs are anatomically similar to those of humans. Genetically modified pigs offer hope of a limitless supply of organs and cells for those in need

Omicron cases drop in New York, other US cities

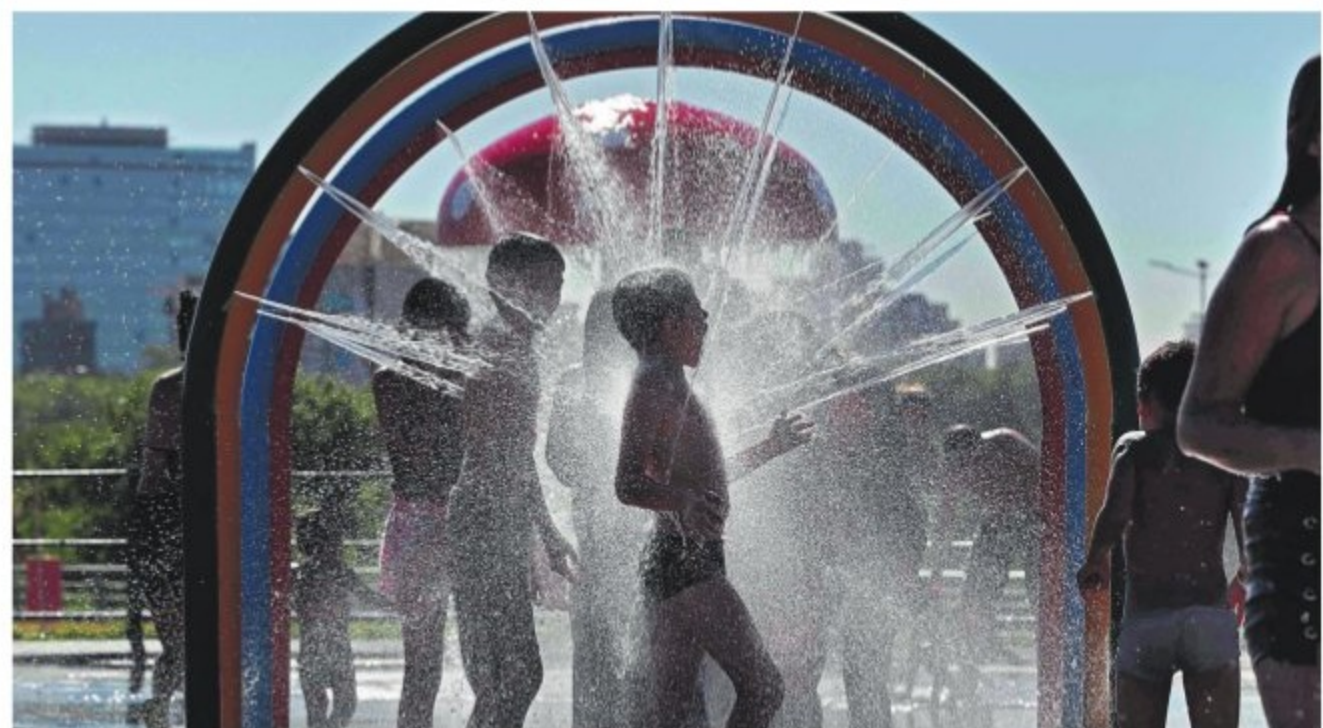
COVID

NEW YORK: The US's Omicron wave is beginning to recede in New York and other major cities, official data showed this week, even as Covid-19 hospitalisations, a lagging indicator, reached new highs. The trend of explosive rises in Omicron cases

followed by equally fast declines follows similar patterns seen in Britain and in South Africa, where the variant was first reported in late November. In New York city, the seven-day average of new daily cases has been falling since around January 2, when they peaked at 40,000 a day — an all-time record. The figure

stood at around 28,500 on January 10, still higher than anything seen in previous waves caused by other strains, an official tracker showed Friday.

Similar drops were visible in New York state, New Jersey and Chicago, the country's third-largest city, as well as in the capital Washington.



JUST CHILLING

Children cool off in a water game at the Parque de los Niños (Children's Park) in Buenos Aires, Argentina | AFP

FACEBOOK, GOOGLE PACT TO MANIPULATE DIGITAL AD MARKET?

TECH

WASHINGTON: Top bosses of Google and Facebook were directly involved in approving an allegedly illegal 2018 deal to cement their dominance of the online advertising market, US court documents revealed on Friday.

The records, part of an anti-trust lawsuit by a coalition of US states targeting Google, make serious allegations against Big Tech giants long accused of holding monopolies.

According to the states' accusations, the online search colossus sought to oust competition by manipulating ad auctions — the ultra-sophisticated system that determines which ads appear on web pages based on the anonymized profiles of internet users.

The legal documents filed in a New York court clearly refer to Sundar Pichai, chief of Google's parent firm Alphabet, as well as Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg and CEO Mark Zuckerberg — even if

their names were redacted.

"Google CEO Sundar Pichai also personally signed off on the terms of the deal," the suit said. The documents note that the economic terms were emailed to Facebook's CEO and he was advised: "We're nearly ready to sign and need your approval to move forward."

Google did not respond to a request for comment Friday, but has adamantly denied manipulating the digital ad market.

It was the third time the suit was amended, and did not list Facebook or its parent company Meta as defendants.

"Meta's non-exclusive bidding agreement with Google and the similar agreements we have with other bidding platforms, have helped to increase competition for ad placements," a spokesperson said in reply to an AFP inquiry.

"These business relationships enable Meta to deliver more value to advertisers while fairly compensating publishers, resulting in better outcomes for all."



Elephants die after eating plastic waste at Sri Lanka's dump yard

CONSERVATION

COLOMBO: Conservationists and veterinarians are warning that plastic waste in an open landfill in eastern Sri Lanka is killing elephants in the region, after two more were found dead over the weekend. Around 20 elephants have died over the last eight years after consuming plastic trash in the dump in Pallakkadu village in Ampara district, about 210 kilometers (130 miles) east of the capital, Colombo.

Examinations of the dead animals showed they had swallowed

large amounts of nondegradable plastic that is found in the garbage dump, wildlife veterinarian Nihal Pushpakumara said. "Pol-ythene, food wrappers, plastic, other non-digestibles and water were the only things we could see in the post mortems," he said.

Elephants are revered in Sri Lanka but are also endangered. Their numbers have dwindled from about 14,000 in the 19th century to 6,000 in 2011, according to the country's first elephant census. They are increasingly vulnerable because of the loss and degradation of their natural



habitat. Many venture closer to human settlements in search of food, and some are killed by poachers or farmers angry over damage to their crops.

Hungry elephants seek out the waste in the landfill, consuming

plastic as well as sharp objects that damage their digestive systems, Pushpakumara said. "The elephants then stop eating and become too weak to keep their heavy frames upright. When that happens, they can't consume food or water, which quickens their death," he said.

In 2017, the government announced that it will recycle the garbage in dumps near wildlife zones to prevent elephants from consuming plastic waste. It also said electric fences would be erected around the sites to keep the animals away. But neither

has been fully implemented.

There are 54 waste dumps in wildlife zones around the country, with around 300 elephants roaming near them, according to officials. The waste management site in Pallakkadu village was set up in 2008 with aid from the European Union.

Garbage collected from nine nearby villages is being dumped there but is not being recycled. In 2014, the electric fence protecting the site was struck by lightning and authorities never repaired it, allowing elephants to enter and rummage through the dump.



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